

SPORTS • THURSDAY AUGUST 24
Aaronovitch on
and Wasps Page 2

£2.38m
boost for
English
cricket

England's international cricket team yesterday received a £2.38m boost for the 1996-97 season. The money will be used to pay the salaries of the players and the costs of the tour of Australia.

pics
na



Ex
University and college
vocational
In tomorrow's paper



Sooty in
sex scandal
Page 3



THE INDEPENDENT

3,070 WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST 1996 WEATHER: Cloudy with showers 40p (inc. VAT)

Pupils dumped in exam race

Thousands excluded from GCSEs as schools chase league targets

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Thousands of pupils have been withdrawn from GCSE exams this year, amid fears that schools are holding back weak candidates to boost their league table scores. This new-style selection is expected to have helped raise the GCSE pass rate, due to be announced today, by more than one percentage point, *The Independent* has learned.

Almost 54 per cent of exam takers are expected to be grade C or above this year, but it seems that up to 50,000 pupils have never been entered at all - at least 11,500 more than last

year. Added to those who failed, never completed the course or did not turn up for the exams, the figures show that more than 90,000 pupils - more than one in seven - left school without qualifications this summer.

The revelation will raise new questions about Britain's ability to compete with other industrialised nations, such as Germany and Japan, where most pupils stay on at school longer and leave better qualified.

Last night opposition politicians angrily condemned the

trend as proof that increased competition in the education system was leaving many youngsters on the scrap-heap.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrats' education spokesman, said weaker candidates were being kept out of the exam room. "Too many young people's futures are being sacrificed on the altar of Tory league tables and market forces in education. Fear of these tables is leaving less able pupils in a class of their own - as far away from the exam halls as possible," he said.

There are almost 18,000 extra 16 year-olds in the system

this year because of a rise in the birth rate, taking the total to almost 600,000. But despite the 3 per cent rise in pupil numbers, the number of exam entries has gone up by just 1 per cent, or about 6,300 candidates.

Figures compiled by the Labour Party show that in recent years, one pupil in eight has left school without qualifications. The disappearance of about 11,500 pupils from the system this year suggests that that proportion is likely to rise dramatically.

David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, said he was determined to see all pupils reaching at least GCSE level by the age of 18.

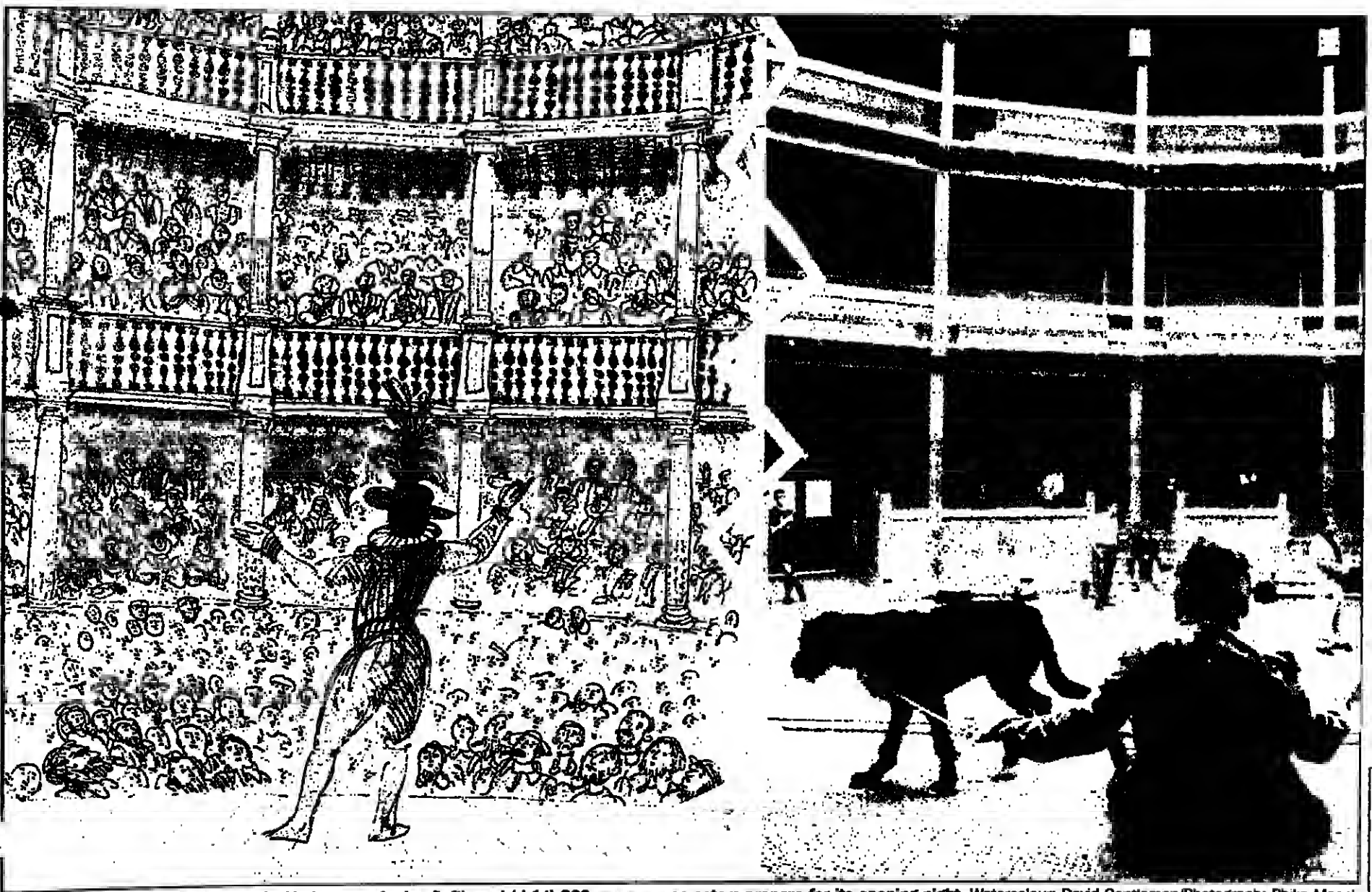
"Without essential qualifications, these young people will find it increasingly difficult to find lasting work or to move on to further qualifications later in life," he said.

League tables, introduced nationally in 1993, show the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A-C grades at GCSE rising annually, and now standing at 43.5 per cent.

But they tend to ignore the long tail of underachievement which many commentators feel

How to get a university place

Almost 220,000 students have now been awarded university places for this Autumn, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, Ucas, said last night. That left 70,000 places still available, with 108,000 people eligible to apply for them, officials confirmed. The latest official Ucas listings of places available through clearing are in section two of today's *Independent*.



Resurrection: The Globe as it was in Shakespeare's day (left); and (right) 300 years on, as actors prepare for its opening night. Watercolour: David Gentilman/Photograph: Philip Meech

Kremlin at war over Chechen conflict

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Top Russian officials were yesterday fighting over who is in charge of resolving the Chechen war while President Boris Yeltsin - long rumoured to be ill - took off for what his aides insisted was a break in his country. His weakness has created a crucial moment in the heart of the Kremlin.

While confusion and intrigue swept through Moscow, the

clock ticked towards tomorrow's deadline, when the Russian acting commander in the war zone says he will start bombing Grozny in order to wrest back control of the city. Aides to President Yeltsin have dismissed media reports that Mr Yeltsin has had another bout of cardiac trouble, after his two heart attacks last year. They have dismissed a *Time* magazine article which said the Kremlin is considering sending him to a Swiss clinic for double by-pass surgery. And

they have denied a report yesterday by Moscow's Ekho Moskvy radio station, which alleged he had been in a special cardiologist centre for the last five days.

But if he is not ill - and the signs are that he is - his decision to set off on holiday in the Russian north-west is baffling. He left behind a furious dispute between Alexander Lebed, head of the Security Council, who is expected to go to Chechnya today, and hardliners within the government who cling to

QUICKLY

Children in squalor
Four children, all aged four years or younger, have been found unattended in a filthy house used as a drinking den in north Belfast. Neighbours told of seeing a small child clambering out of a window to eat bread left for birds. Page 3

Tory 'arrogance'
The Tory claim to be the only party that can be trusted to defend the constitution has been blown apart by ministers' "high-handed and arrogant" treatment of EU legislation, shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw said yesterday. Page 2

Demonic duo given lordly reward

ANTHONY BEVINS
Political Editor

John Major gave his blessing to the "demon Blair" advertising campaign last night, rewarding the two men responsible for its creation with seats in the Lords.

The midnight announcement of life peerages for advertising wizard Maurice Saatchi and Tory public relations guru Peter Gummer was immediately denounced by Labour.

Frontbencher Frank Dobson said: "Awarding peerages to Peter Gummer and Maurice Saatchi takes the Tory party and the peerage system to new depths. But no coronets and ermine will cover up Maurice Saatchi and Peter Gummer's role in dragging British politics lower than the gutter. When they're deciding which title to

take, one of them will be Lord of the Lies.

"They've already admitted that it's a lie to portray Tony Blair as the devil incarnate. They've already admitted their object was to make the image of him the principal image of the election campaign. They are proud to peddle lies. This announcement confirms that John Major has given his personal seal of approval for the most offensive election campaigning ever."

Mr Saatchi is on holiday, but a spokesman for M&C Saatchi replied: "This is a disgusting slur on a man who has made the British advertising industry respected throughout the world, and created thousands of jobs."

While the peerages would have been offered well before the "New Labour, New Danger" campaign climaxed with

the satanic portrayal of Tony Blair, the timing of the announcement was entirely in the gift of the Prime Minister. It can be taken as his calculated response to those urging a retreat.

The peerages for Mr Saatchi and Mr Gummer, brother of the Environment Secretary, were included in a list of 14 "working peers" - an unusually balanced list of six Tories, six Labour and two Liberal Democrat candidates.

The Tory list included two women from the party machine - Joyce Anelay and Hazel Byford; Sir Ian Macdonald, chairman of Tesco; and John Taylor, the barrister who unsuccessfully contested Cheltenham - and Tory racism - in the last election. He will be the only Afro-Caribbean Tory in the Lords.

The Labour peers include two women: Meta Ramsay, a former adviser to the late John Smith, and Elizabeth Symons, leader of the Association of First Division Civil Servants. Mr Blair also nominated Swraj Paul, chairman of the Caparo iron and steel group, which has donated £113,000 to Labour since 1993, plus £460,000 a year to charity; Sir Richard Rogers, architect of the Pompidou Centre in Paris; and the Lloyd's of London building; David Currie, professor of economics at the London Business School; and Larry Whitty, Labour's former general secretary.

Paddy Ashdown has not only nominated one of his own party stalwarts, Martin Thomas QC, president of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, but also John Alderdice, leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Plum signings, page 4

Gentlemen of Verona hope to avoid a tempest

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

After more than 40 years of dreaming, planning, fund-raising and laborious construction, tonight's opening night at Shakespeare's Globe is under threat from a typically English source - the weather.

Yesterday, staff at the open-air theatre on London's South Bank were scanning the skies anxiously as thunderstorms threatened to drench its sell-out first audience in its prologue season.

Much of the replica of the famous "wooden O" on London's South Bank is as open to the elements as it would have been in the 16th century - and with lowering clouds threatening a break in the fine weather, the 500 "groundlings" who will stand during the performance risk a wetting.

"I am like a fisherman, watching the Thames, watching the skies," the artistic director Mark Rylance told a press conference. "But we are quite prepared."

Plastic macs will be on sale in the Globe shop at £2 a time, and theatre-goers will be free to rush out to buy one at the first sign of rain - even while the play is going on.

The story of Shakespeare's Globe is the story of the American film director Sam Wanamaker, father of actress Zoe Wanamaker, who began his campaign to build the theatre after visiting the site of the original and discovering it was marked only by a brass plate on a hawthorn wall.

He established the Globe Playhouse Trust site in 1949, 300 yards away from the first Globe, which burned down in 1613. But a decades-long battle for funds followed, solved at last by a lottery grant.

For Ms Wanamaker in particular the triumph of his vision will be bitter-sweet. Her father died in December 1993, shortly after construction started. But as Keith Baxter remarked at his memorial service: "Like Sir Galahad he saw a glimpse of his dream before he died."

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news

Potted history of a love for tea

Everything stops for tea – even time itself, apparently. The Robert Adam-designed state rooms of Syon House, the London home of the Duke of Northumberland, have become the venue for a celebration of Georgian and Regency Britain's passion for the cup that cheers without intoxicating.

In a scene to stir a tea-lover's heart the exhibition, which opens today, features a table set for two as it would have been in the late 18th Century, with costumed mannequins on hand to "take tea".

Silver, china, documents and tea-drinking memorabilia from the Northumberland family archives are in the exhibition, as are a group of seven historic tea pots from the Norwich Castle Museum collection.

There is also material from the archives of Twinings, the 290-year-old tea blending company.

The exhibition is being held in association with Twinings.



Cup of joy: The hands of Sam Twining, of the 290-year-old tea blenders Twinings, holding one of the exhibition's cups

Photograph: Jane Baker

The stifling of democracy: Prime Minister allows Parliament to be by-passed, says Straw

EU laws 'blocked by arrogance'

ANTHONY BEVINS and JOHN LICHFIELD

The Tory claim to be the only party that can be trusted to defend the constitution has been blown apart by ministers' "high-handed and arrogant" treatment of European Union legislation, shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw said yesterday.

Commenting on yesterday's exclusive report, in *The Independent*, of the way in which Whitehall and Brussels had hindered and over-riden the democratic checks of Westminster, Mr Straw blamed John Major and his ministers.

"The scrutiny of legislation ought to be one of Parliament's most important functions," he said.

"But the Prime Minister and

his colleagues are allowing Parliament to be by-passed. This gives the lie to the claim that they are 'haters of Britain' in Europe.

"It also blows apart Mr Major's claim that he is the only one that can be trusted with the constitution."

Mr Straw said the Prime Minister had made a June speech, in which he had boasted about the "new procedures" that had been introduced for the scrutiny of European legislation.

The Labour frontbencher said there had been no mention in the Major speech of how the Commons European Legislation Committee was being asked to examine directives and regulations without official texts; of how it was being forced to wait up to 14 months for



Jack Straw: Major 'ignorant'

replies to requests for information from Whitehall; of how ministers were over-riding Westminster blocks on legislation; and how Whitehall departments were repeatedly sending material to wrong ad-

resses – or even non-existent select committees.

"Mr Major shows stunning ignorance of his own Government's practice on European legislation," Mr Straw said.

"His Government is showing a high-handed and arrogant approach to this matter, with little regard for Parliament's proper role as a check on the executive."

As for Whitehall's "lackadaisical" attitude towards the select committee, Mr Straw said: "The administrative machinery of Whitehall is one of the most efficient in Europe."

"The British civil service is capable of Rolls Royce administration, and if things are going wrong in this way, one can only assume that officials are taking their lead from ministers. The

ministers are setting the tone for the behaviour of their departments."

Mr Straw said that Jimmy Hood, the Labour chairman of the European Legislation Committee, and his all-party colleagues, were working very hard, but their efforts were being thwarted by Brussels and Whitehall.

"This is not the fault of the Commons: the Government has all the power; the procedure is dominated by ministers."

The European Commission denied there was any systematic problem with the publication of legislative proposals in English. EU officials said that in most cases the official English texts were available within a few days of proposals being adopted by the Commission. The texts were then provided to member

governments, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It was the job of member governments to pass the documents on to its own institutions.

Foreign Office sources also said that the great majority of EU documents were reaching the committee promptly. The sources said that there had been delays in some cases (often when there was a legal-linguistic dispute about the text).

As a result, the Government was pushing for a minimum period for publication.

Meanwhile, the committee will retaliate when the Commons returns from its summer break on 14 October – by refusing to approve any legislation that is delivered without an official text – in English.

Why Gummer gave short notice over legislation

The MPs who vet European legislation on behalf of the Commons were given only two days' notice when John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, needed them to lift a block on four proposals last summer.

Mr Gummer's request was all the more surprising because he had already kept the same MPs waiting 14 months for

Anthony Bevin on environment proposals MPs were asked to approve without seeing

some information they had requested on one of the pieces of Brussels legislation.

But Mr Gummer was in a hurry. The European Legislation Committee had not given essential scrutiny clearance to the proposals, but he sent them a note on 20 June last year, say-

ing that environment ministers were due to meet to enact the four items on 22 June.

According to Westminster rules, Mr Gummer should not agree to legislation without that essential clearance – a democratic fail-safe. Given the timetable, the

committee acted with speed and efficiency, allowing one of Mr Gummer's ministers to appear and give oral evidence the next day, 21 June.

In breach of other rules, there was no official text for three of the proposals; MPs were expected to clear them without seeing them.

"The remaining proposal had been held up by us, awaiting further information from the department, which at that time had been outstanding for no less than 14 months," the committee says.

Three of the proposals were subsequently cleared, but the Commons block remained on an important draft directive on integrated pollution prevention and control.

The agreed position of the council of ministers on that di-

rective was circulated in French on 27 June last year; the English version was sent out by Brussels on 31 July.

But that document – vital to the scrutiny process – was not sent to the committee by the Department of the Environment for more than two months. It was received by the committee on 13 October.

The legislation was again examined by the select committee on 1 November, and it decided the issue was important enough to be referred to the Commons for debate.

That debate, held by a European standing committee – not by the full Commons – took place on 13 December.

Before the debate had even started, MPs were told by one of Mr Gummer's most junior ministers that the scrutiny re-

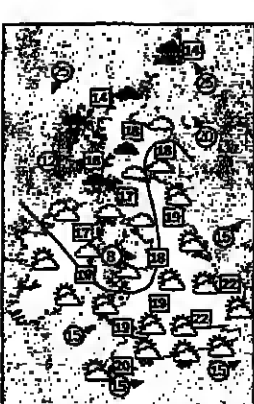
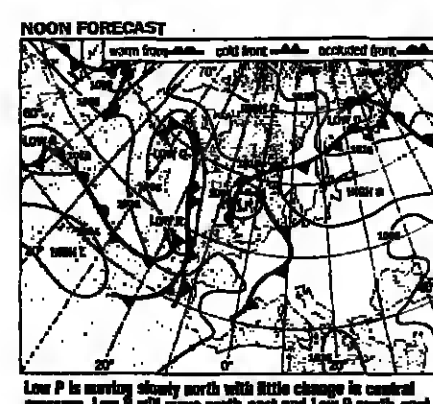
serve had been lifted "by mistake". The proposal had been enacted by the Council of Ministers on 27 November.

The mistake had happened because the office of the UK Permanent Representative in Brussels had received its instructions in a phone call with the Foreign Office. "Further investigation suggested that two draft directives had been confused: that on integrated pollution prevention and control – IPPC – with that on polychlorinated biphenyls – PCBs."

Because of that incident, Tony Newton, Leader of the Commons, told MPs that a new procedure had been introduced, adding that a Commons scrutiny block would in future only be lifted on written instructions from the Foreign Office.

One week after that promise was made last April, yet another Commons block was lifted by mistake.

Weather forecast



Low P is moving slowly north with little change in position. Low Q will move north-east and Low R south-east.

Area	High	Low	Wind	Cloud	Temp
London	18.0	12.0	SW	Partly Cloudy	15.0
Bristol	17.0	11.0	SW	Partly Cloudy	14.0
Manchester	16.0	10.0	SW	Partly Cloudy	13.0
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New working practices 'are at root of stress'

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Increasing stress among British workers is caused by harder work, longer hours and increased responsibilities rather than some vague psychological condition.

A study published yesterday found that nearly half of all employees are expected to put in extra hours, but only 30 per cent of it is paid.

Nearly four out of ten respondents to a survey conducted by the charity-funded Global Futures organisation, have had their contracts changed since starting their job, usually by an employer imposing higher targets and longer hours.

Global Futures, which conducts research into the impact of demographic and economic change on people's attitudes to work, found that most working people were resigned to an insecure future.

However, trades unions do not seem to have been a beneficiary of the tougher regimes in the workplace. Interviewees

were three times more likely to turn to their manager to sort out work problems than a union representative.

Particularly worrying for the labour movement is that only two per cent of those under the age of 25 thought union representatives were worth consulting over employment difficulties. Less than a quarter of the younger employees were union members, compared with around half of the whole workforce.

Alan Hudson, author of the report, said stress at work was often treated as if it were a psychological condition with a life of its own.

"Our findings shows there is no mystery about the causes of stress. The dramatic changes in the workplace over the last decade have left people working longer and harder with more responsibilities. If people are ill, it is probably more to do with these extra pressures than any psychological factors."

The survey found that there was a preoccupation with training and education among re-

spondents and that attitudes to quality had undergone a "transformation".

Many workplaces had introduced "customer-orientated" practices and "total quality management". Two-thirds of respondents said they were increasingly involved in decision-making, while 85 per cent said they felt personally responsible all the time for the work they do.

In 1,000 interviews with employees, conducted between October 1994 and February 1995, Mr Hudson found that nearly three-quarters of the workforce was now expected to cover for absent colleagues, although nearly half accept the responsibility.

Fewer than one in ten people go out with workmates more than once a week. A third go out with them once every three months and more than one in ten never do. The author reports that leisure time has become much more individualised than it was, reflecting the growth in family-orientated pursuits.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Industrial unrest spread to more train operating companies and now affects up to 18,000 employees throughout most of the old British Rail network. Meanwhile, at London Underground, some 1,800 drivers belonging to the Aslef union are today expected to accept a peace formula to end a campaign of 24-hour stoppages which has brought travel chaos to the capital. Their 900 colleagues in the RMT transport union, however, are predicted to reject the deal and may press ahead with a scheduled stoppage on Friday. *Barrie Clement*

Mandy Allwood, the 31-year-old woman who is expecting octuplets, will continue to be treated by Professor Kypros Nicolaides, a leading specialist in multiple births and foetal reduction, it emerged last night.

Solihull Health Authority, which is responsible for her care, has reversed its decision not to pay for Ms Allwood's specialist treatment in London, in the interests of her health and that of her babies. The health authority had argued that equivalent care, at less cost, was available in Birmingham for Ms Allwood, who has signed a six-figure deal with the *News of the World* for her story. *Liz Hunt*

The Government will unveil new pollution standards today amid concern over the growing impact of poor air standards on the nation's health. The Liberal Democrats claimed yesterday that the current "crisis" in the number of asthma sufferers was partly caused by air pollution and lack of concerted Government action.

Their claims came after a weekend of the worst smog levels in the country this year. *Michael Street*

A loyalist parade has been banned by police from going through the Catholic Lower Ormeau district of south Belfast on Sunday. The area has in recent years become a flashpoint area for marches, with local nationalist residents objecting to loyalists marching through the district.

The march, organised by the Royal Black Preceptory, is one of the last of the marching season. Several other Royal Black Preceptory parades are planned for this weekend, including one in the south London village of Bellinham where marchers and protesters were involved in a 19-hour standoff at an Apprentice Boys church parade eight days ago. *David McKelrick*

DNA samples taken from five teenage boys on the same French school trip as murdered teenager Caroline Dickinson proved negative, police said yesterday. Caroline was raped and murdered during a school trip to the town of Plaine-Fougères, Brittany, on 18 July. The DNA tests from the boys were taken after five French detectives arrived in Launceston, Cornwall, to continue the inquiry with the help of 20 Devon and Cornwall officers.

The parents of missing youngsters Jodi and Tom Loughlin may face a lifetime of uncertainty over their children's fate. Attempts to find Jodi, six, and her four-year-old brother, who went missing from Holme beach near Hunstanton, Norfolk, on Sunday, had proved fruitless last night. Police were increasingly afraid that the children were swept out to sea after excitedly running into the sea at the start of their holiday. Local tide experts said there was a good chance that the bodies might never be found.

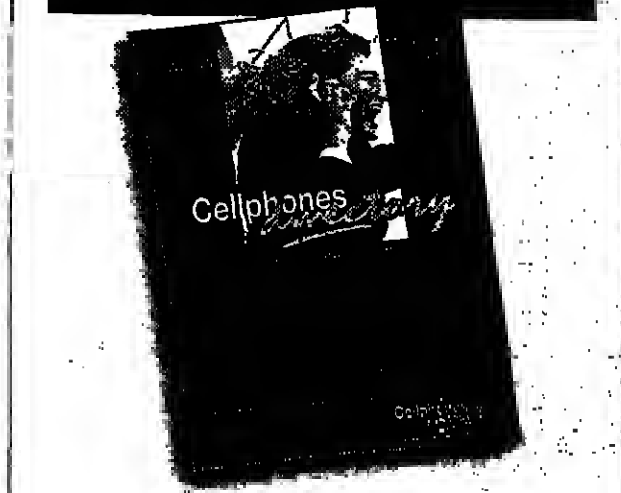
A law firm is to fight for compensation for people who claim serious side-effects from the anti-malarial drug, Lariam. Bristol-based Lawrence Tuckett said it had been awarded an exclusive legal aid contract to pursue a claim against Swiss pharmaceutical giants Hoffman-La Roche. It had been contacted by around 500 prospective litigants.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Toddlers left in Belfast drinking den

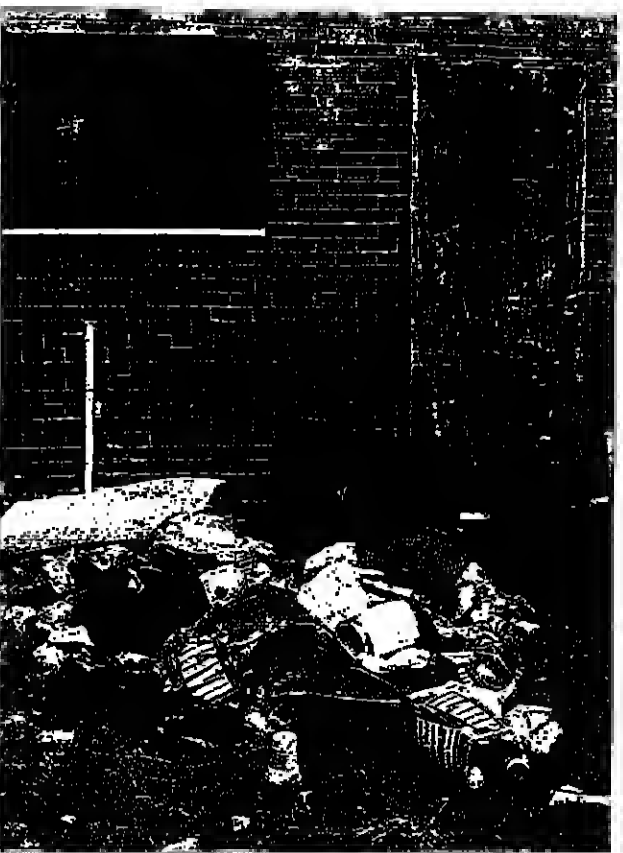
Children found in 'unbelievable' squalor

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

An inquiry has been launched into a case in which four children, all aged four years or younger, were found unattended in a filthy house used as a drinking den in north Belfast. Conditions in the house shocked social workers and police, who had to mask their faces against the smell of urine and faeces. Neighbours told of seeing a four-year-old boy clambering out of a window to eat bread left for birds. He was also seen scavenging through discarded take-away food cartons.

The children's mother, who is only 20-years-old, reportedly had left them to attend a party 30 miles away. Neighbours who alerted the authorities to the plight of the children were commended for their sense of duty. The house is in the Ardoyne, one of Belfast's toughest districts, which is known as a blackspot both for unemployment and for republican violence.

The four children - three boys aged four, three, and 10 months, and their two-year-old sister - were taken into care early on Saturday morning. Police who went the house found four drunken youths, who were unrelated to the family. Beer cans were scattered throughout the house and the garden. A baby's cot was soaked in urine, while more urine was found in milk bottles. The smell was described as "unbelievable." After the children were taken into care, local people moved in to clean the house, taking away 10 bags of rubbish.



Home alone: the rubbish-strewn exterior of the Ardoyne house, where a four-year-old was reduced to scavenging bird food

The North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust said the family was known to staff and that out-of-hours social work services had responded promptly. Locals said social workers had visited the house at least twice. One woman said: "The welfare was to blame. They made regular visits but they just seemed to have overlooked the problem. This is what made us so angry. When you think of what those poor children had to suffer - it's awful."

A local Sinn Féin councillor, Bobby Lavery, has been to the house before, and it's going to happen again. It's not because the people working for welfare are bad people. There's not enough money being put in with Government cutbacks. Government cutbacks are causing this pain to the children."

Judy Kennedy, the health trust's programme manager of family and child-care, said the children were safe and well in care. She said neglect, unlike physical or sexual abuse, where there were obvious physical signs, was difficult to assess and could deteriorate very rapidly. She added: "By law we are required in the first instance to really try and support parents, and to view admission to care as something which only happens when there is really no other option." She said the trust would be examining the case and its treatment very carefully.

Fur flies over bear facts about TV star's shocking sunshine lovenest



Sooty: my night of passion

JOHN WINDSOR

After 44 years, Sooty has discovered sex. In next month's new series of *Sooty & Co* - the first since the glove-puppet bear was bought for £2.4m by a Japanese-owned hawk - he forgets his water pistol and struts his stuff with senioritas in a Spanish disco.

In the same episode, his friend Soo the panda is smored by hunky restaurant-owner Antonio and driven off in his silver Lamborghini Espada. Only the mongrel Sweep fails to adapt to his chum Sooty's sophisticated new lifestyle: he gets a kiss from a seniorita and faints.

"It's all in the best possible taste," insisted Sooty's puppet-master, Matthew Corbett, who received £1.1m in the deal with the Guinness Mahon merchant bank in May.

But loyal, middle-aged Sooty fans, who grew up with the bear's childish tricks with Matthew's father, Harry, on BBC television in the Fifties and Sixties, will be wringing their hands - and calling Soo a bad lot for debauching the innocent bear who, like Peter Pan, seemed not to want to grow up.

Executives at the BBC and ITV have always had misgivings about Soo, introduced 12 years after Sooty's debut. The BBC insisted that little bears did not have girlfriends and Thames Television issued an edict that the pair should not touch. More recently, Granada, which will show the new series, adopted a more liberal attitude. Sooty and Soo became like "kissing cousins".

But in the Costa del Sol, on his first-ever trip abroad, Sooty hits the high life as only a mite bear with no parts below the hips can. The senioritas are genuine sexy humans, filmed in a disco in Benidorm. Viewers will see Matthew preen himself in anticipation, mistakenly thinking it is he that the flirty females want to drag onto the dance floor. But they turn out to be Sooty fans. "Not you, grandfather," they tell him, "the little yellow bear."

Meanwhile, assisted by the tricks of television technology, Sooty and Sweep dance with voluptuous grown-ups while the incorrigible Soo leaves in the Lamborghini.

John Stephens, Sooty International's director of programmes and Granada's associate producer of the Sooty series, explains: "Soo is a bit vain. All the flattery goes to her head and then she's given the run around - a bit like some English girls abroad, I'm afraid."

Sooty did not take a fancy to any particular seniorita, he said, and it was only Matthew who seemed worried when Soo was whisked away by the seductive Antonio. "The point about Sooty," he said, "is that in the series he's an international star abroad, getting adulation from his many fans. He takes this in his stride - he's a bear about town."

Love puppet: Sooty joins other party animals as they dance the night away under the flashing lights of a glamorous discotheque

Women in revealing clothes have no redress, says lawyer

STEVE BOGGAN
and SHENAI RAIF

Women who wear revealing clothes in public have no right to complain if men subsequently sneak photographs or video pictures of them, a female barrister told a court yesterday. Echoing the sort of language once used by male lawyers in court, Jacqueline Samuel said: "If a member of the public, whether royal or not, is willing to go into a public place showing a low cleavage it is befores anyone to criticise the taking of a picture. It is no offence at all to take videos of people who wear low-neck dresses in public places."

Ms Samuel was prosecuting Gary Archer, 36, the former

head of security at Harvey Nichols who came to national attention in January when security cameras at the store were used to record a visit of the Princess of Wales, complete with lingering shots of her legs and cleavage.

Mr Archer was facing two unrelated charges of theft. During legal argument over whether his tabloid "video rat" reputation would hamper his chances of a fair hearing, Ms Samuel said the trial should go ahead, adding: "It is not as if he climbed over the wall of Kensington Palace and stuck a video camera through her bedroom window."

After the hearing at Southwark Crown Court, London, the barrister said she was making a legal point, not expressing

a point of view. "The point was whether the defendant would have his reputation lowered in the view of a jury by taking a photograph of a woman in a low-cut dress," she said. "If someone goes into a public place wearing a low-cut dress and someone takes a photograph or a video they cannot complain later."

Last night, her comments came under fire from fellow women solicitors and politicians.

Labour's spokeswoman on women's affairs, Janet Anderson said: "This woman barrister may have been making a legal point, but I think she could have chosen her words more sensitively and carefully. To suggest Diana - or any woman - was inviting it because

of the way she was dressed is quite disgraceful."

Alison Parkinson, chairwoman of the Association of Women Solicitors, said: "I can see the point she was trying to make - because it is not an offence to film anyone in public - but it was unfortunate she used these words to make it."

The case against Mr Archer, of Bridgewater, Somerset, was thrown out by the judge, Recorder Desmond Browne QC, because the time that had elapsed since the alleged thefts - of two walkie-talkies, two rugs and a fountain pen - in 1993 had prevented him from tracing a vital witness.

However, he agreed with Ms Samuel that the "video rat" stories were not in themselves prejudicial.

Will the real Tony Blair please stand up?

JOJO MOYES

"I do have a similar smile, but fortunately my ears lie flat on my head. I have to wad them out with bits of wadding. And I'm going to do a bit of careful hair-dressing to give it that look. We're the same height, same We're the same colour. But it's very difficult with him because there are no props or glasses."

Michael Aidan-Ross is apparently one of a rare breed: the parody of a parody. Last night it emerged that Mr Blair's "bland" features have made it impossible to get an accurate likeness.

"We've been looking for a Tony Blair for eight months but we can't find anyone who looks anything like him. One paper called him 'bland Blair' so

perhaps he's too bland to have a double," said Michael Sweeney, head of doubles agency Lookalikes. "We have a few John Majors and at some dinner speeches people like to have a leader of the opposition to have a bit of a tuck. We've had a couple of those but we haven't been able to get a Tony Blair, which meant we had to use a Clinton," he said. "That obviously wasn't as satisfactory."

Susan Scott, whose agency represents Mr Aidan-Ross, conducted a hunt for her own Blair lookalikes through a television programme. "The problem is he's quite bland. Even my next-door neighbour looks a bit like him," she said. "He's very normal looking with no particular characteristics. But the more we get to know him the caricaturists will be able to pull some-

thing out. I think this devil's eyes thing might come along."

The difficulties in getting an accurate likeness of Mr Blair are not confined to lookalike agencies. Madame Tussauds, who recently produced a waxwork model of the opposition leader, said that his image had proved somewhat difficult.

The problem for our sculptor was that at the sitting, which was where she met him, he was all smiles, and in most of [the photographs] he was all smiles," the spokeswoman said. "But when we discussed his pose with him he had a look around and saw the models of John Major and Paddy Ashdown, which looked... serious. So he decided he'd like to look quite serious, which she found very difficult." Mr Blair, it emerged, did not look recog-

nizably like Mr Blair when straight-faced. Becoming a convincing Mr Blair in the run up to an election may prove very lucrative, according to agencies. Guest appearances mean a "good" Tony Blair can earn £15,000-£20,000 in three months.

Mr Aidan-Ross is well aware of this. He watches political coverage and even joined the Labour Party to try and get his portrayal as accurate as possible. The key, he says, is in the mannerisms. "He looks directly at people, unlike other politicians," he said. "I've heard criticisms of his smile but apart from that I think he's actually pretty good looking. But I'm bound to say that, aren't I?"

And the real Tony Blair? He is the man in the middle (above).



A Blair lookalike, a waxwork, and the man himself - but which is which?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHS

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that tragedy but, as a tiny calf this, "Gift from Heaven" is extremely vulnerable. That's why we'd like you to help protect Mbolifue by joining our adoption scheme for just £2 a month. In return, you'll receive a photograph of Mbolifue (when we get one!) and regular update bulletins, following your call's progress. Please help us if you can.

* Unfortunately, the grass is too high at this time of year for us to photograph baby Mbolifue. This picture of a white rhino comes from our archive.

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news

Just how good do we really feel?

New mortgages highest since 1994 as credit fuels high street

NIC CICUTTI

It may not feel like the "feel-good factor" yet, but economists, housing analysts and retailers queued up yesterday to tell us that rising spending means that though still not in a state of ecstatic happiness, we are no longer feeling as grumpy as last year.

Mortgage-lending figures from the Building Societies Association showed that new lending commitments rose to 53,000 in July, the highest total since March 1994. Lending totalled £1.2bn, 7 per cent more than in the same period last year.

The BSA added that mortgages were being repaid more quickly, mainly because some borrowers had not changed their standing orders when interest rates fell.

Ron Armstrong, the BSA's deputy director general, said: "Other housing market indicators look promising. Transactions have been increasing since April and house prices have also been rising, encouraging more sellers on to the market."

Further evidence of an increase came from the Credit Card Research Group, which said that plastic-card spending in July was, at £6.9bn, some 16 per cent up on the same period last year. The use of cards in the High Street was up 19 per cent. Elizabeth Phillips, director of the group, said, however, that part of the increase came from the growing popularity of cards compared to money: "Consumers are realising that they can use their deb-

it cards in a wider variety of stores than only supermarkets and petrol stations."

John Lewis said sales at its 23 stores were 7.5 per cent up in the past six months compared to the same period last year.

Ruth Parkhouse, assistant director at the British Retail Consortium, the retail trade body, said: "Sales have increased by about 3 per cent. We have seen increases in almost every single retail area."

"This seems to be because customers' confidence is returning. The areas where sales are returning include things like carpets and furnishings, china and glassware, obviously related to the return of confidence in the housing market."

"Generally, you have to say that if someone is prepared to spend a couple of thousands of pounds on new furniture they must be reasonably satisfied that they are not going to lose their jobs."

Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Greenwell, added: "It is down to a combination of factors, including mortgage interest rates down to their lowest level for more than 30 years, falling unemployment, down from 7.9 million to 2.1 million in the past four years and the anticipated windfall from building society flotations."

"Probably the most important thing is the state of the housing market which has risen more than 5 per cent in the past 12 months. Negative equity is gradually becoming a thing of the past for many people."

Shares at record high, page 16



Comfortably off again: A bed put to the test in a London department store yesterday

Photograph: Tom Pilsten

Call it a boom? It's just juggling with statistics, say Labour

Alistair Darling, Labour's shadow Treasury secretary, yesterday dismissed suggestions that the long-awaited "feel-good factor" was finally returning and might boost the electoral fortunes of the Government, writes Nic Cicutti.

Mr Darling said that an average family was paying £2,000 more in tax than four years ago and dismissed as "nonsense" suggestions that better economic figures showed a new boom is on the way.

"We want to see our constituents feeling better," he said yesterday.

"Many of them deserve it, because they have had a raw deal for many years, but the fact is that most people don't actually feel better."

"They may feel they are not being clobbered day in day out quite as much as they have been over the last year or two, but they don't feel good and they don't trust the Tories to get them out of the problems this country has been in."

Despite falling unemployment and the lowest interest rates for more than 30 years, stimulating a minor housing market recovery, Mr Darling said: "I think the idea that somehow, because of one or two economic statistics, everything has turned round for the Tories is nonsense."

"People... are worried about what the Tories will do to the health service, they are worried about class sizes, the state of the schools; they are paying higher council taxes, water charges," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today*

programme. He claimed that public borrowing was heading for a £12bn shortfall this year, despite recent optimistic figures. The national debt had doubled since 1990, Mr Darling added.

Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Greenwell, said: "Our own view is that we are returning to a position where consumers are in the forefront of recovery."

"But it could be argued that there are still a number of problems. The first point is the question of debt. People are now already in much more debt this time round than they were at the last stage of the recovery. In 1985, consumer debt was 80 per cent of average income, reaching 115 per cent in 1990. Today, that stands at 106 per cent. People aren't going to feel that good if they owe so much."

Mr Loynes said changes in the labour market mean that while labour is much more flexible, that may not be such a good thing for the man in the street. The job for life is no longer guaranteed, while wages are now scarcely rising above inflation.

"Part of the problem may be a question of psychology. After the boom-and-bust experience of the last decade, it is quite possible that no longer believe in that sort of thing."

Mr Loynes cited a recent survey indicating that, despite several years of falling unemployment, a recent poll showed more people expected it to rise this year than the other way round.

New working peers: List spans glamorous names from business and public relations to loyal party workers and voices from ethnic minorities

Saatchi and Rogers are plum signings for upper chamber

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Lifelong party workers, glamorous names from business, women, and prominent figures from ethnic minorities form the main themes behind the new working peers' list, chosen personally by the three main party leaders.

Alongside the likes of dames Joyce Anelay and Hazel Byford, tireless Tory servants, come the superstars of the advertising and architecture worlds, Maurice

Saatchi and Sir Richard Rogers. While Mr Saatchi's devotion to the Tory cause is well-known - as is that of his fellow media guru, Peter Gummer, also made a working lord - Sir Richard's allegiance to Labour has been more private. Undoubtedly a plum signing for New Labour, Sir Richard's growing prominence as a design and style icon, will bring a flash of brilliance to the Upper Chamber.

The Tories' counterblast is to produce an equally major fig-

ure from retailing, Sir Ian MacLaurin, the guiding light behind Tesco's storming of the high street these past few years. Just as Sir Richard is credited with transforming many of the world's city centres, Sir Ian has spearheaded Tesco's introduction of glitzy, opusmarket lines and new products.

The contrast between Labour's choice of women peers and that of Tories could not be greater. While the two dames, Anelay and Byford,

have remained close to the grass roots, the two new Labour baronesses, Meta Ramsay and Elizabeth Symons, have carved out high-profile careers in a still male-dominated world. Ms Ramsay rose to the top of the Foreign Office before resigning to advise John Smith, the late Labour leader; Ms Symons was the first woman to be appointed general secretary of a frontline trade union - the First Division Association of senior civil servants. A redoubtable

performer before Commons select committees and in negotiations with permanent secretaries, Ms Symons has established the FDA as a major influence on Whitehall policy and reforms.

In what could be seen as a sop to old Labour, one of its stalwarts, Larry Whitty, is ennobled by Tony Blair. The former general secretary of the party under Neil Kinnock and John Smith, he was responsible for guiding through many of their

reforms before being effectively frozen out two years ago.

John Taylor, the black Tory candidate vilified by racists in the general election campaign at Cheltenham in 1992 gets his reward of a peerage from Mr Major. Since being defeated in Cheltenham, Mr Taylor, a barrister, has built a new career as a radio and television presenter.

He will face in the Lords the impressive figure of Swraj Paul, a multi-millionaire Indian businessman. Mr Paul, the founder

of Caparo, the steel group, has spent much of his life trying to come to terms with the death from leukaemia of his daughter Ambika, aged five. He gave £1m to London Zoo to rebuild the children's zoo in her honour.

A close friend of Gordon Brown, Mr Paul will be a considerable economic influence, as will his fellow new Labour peer, David Currie, of the London Business School. Professor Currie's recent specialisation of competition regulation will be

a major plank in any new Labour administration's economic mandate.

Perhaps the most influential voice from any side, however, will be that of Jobo Alderdice, head of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Denied a seat at Westminster by traditional sectarian voting loyalties, his neutral Alliance Party will at last be heard centre-stage. Dr Alderdice will take the Liberal Democrat whip on issues other than Ulster.

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New working peers: Maurice Saatchi, Elizabeth Symons, John Taylor and Swraj Paul

Lords regular and irregular

ANTHONY BEVINS

High-profile peerages do not always live up to the promise; not all those who have been awarded life peerages attend the Lords with the regularity that might have been expected.

According to the latest statistical analysis by the House of Lords, Baroness Thatcher attended only six of the 142 sitting days in the parliamentary year to November 1995.

On the Labour side, Lord (Richard) Aitkenborough attended the Lords on only five days.

Other part-timers include Lord Deedes, the *Telegraph* journalist and former Tory minister, who attended the House on two days; Lord Young of Graffham, a member of the Thatcher government, who attended on four days; Lord King of Wartnaby, former chairman of British Airways, who attended on 26 days; Lord Membin, the violinist, who did not attend at all; and Lord Sieff, former chairman and managing director of Marks & Spencer, who has also not taken his oath during the current Parliament.

Altogether, at the end of July, there were 1,195 peers in the Lords, of whom 81 are

women, and 378 were created under the Life Peerages Act 1958.

The most dedicated Conservative life peer appears to have been Lord Boyd-Carpenter, the former minister, who missed just one day's attendance in the last parliamentary session.

The most dedicated Labour life peers would appear to be Lord Cocks, the former Labour Chief Whip; Lord Patten, the economist and Opposition spokesman in the Lords; and two former MPs, Lord Mollay and Lord Graham - who all attended on every day the House sat.

On the Liberal Democrat benches, Lord Harris of Greenwich, the former Labour Minister, was the most assiduous attendee, missing only two days, and the most dedicated hereditary peers were Lord Monks, who is a Labour peer, and Viscount Simon, a crossbencher, who also attended all 142 days.

As for the cost, the Lords represents good value for money - if its democratic function is accepted. And many would argue that because it is free of the slavish submission to the whips so regularly seen in the Commons, it is more likely to defeat the Government.

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No clue in hunt for Belgian girls

The investigation into the child-sex scandal continued at a string of addresses across Belgium yesterday, but there was still no sign of the two missing teenagers who police believe may still be alive.

The rescue last week of two girls from a cellar where they had been imprisoned, in one case for three months, had raised hopes of finding An Marchal, 19, and Eschir Lamhreck, 17, who vanished from Ostend a year ago. Marc Dutroux and Michel Leclievre, the two men at the centre of the paedophile investigation, have admitted kidnapping the girls.

But despite speculation that the teenagers may have been sold into prostitution abroad, possibly in Germany or the Czech Republic, detectives have

not yet made any formal approaches to foreign police for help. Jean-Pierre van den Berge, head of Interpol's missing children office in Brussels, said: "At the moment Interpol have not received any request from Belgian police to send to other countries."

Banks of condolence for Julie Lejeune and Melissa Russa, both aged eight, have been opened in many towns and cities across Belgium. Their bodies were discovered at the weekend in Sans-la-Buisière

near Charleroi, buried in the garden of Dutroux, a convicted rapist and paedophile whose child-sex crimes were discovered last week. The girls starved to death earlier this year while 34-year-old Dutroux was in prison. They will be buried on Thursday.

In the Charleroi suburb of Marcinelle where Laetitia Defize,

14. and Sabine Dardenne, 12, were found alive in the sound-proof cellar and where Julie and Melissa are believed to have died, a stream of people continue to pay their respects and sign the national petition calling for tougher penalties for the perpetrators of such crimes.

A sign across the building, one of a number of properties owned by Dufroux, calls for the reestablishment of the death penalty which was abolished in 1991. Another states: "Imprisonment for life would be a punishment for anyone who tried."

Dutroux, his second wife Michelle Martin, and associates Lelievre and Jean-Michel Nihoul all face charges in connection with the kidnapping and abuse of Lactina and Sabine. There are fears they may also be involved in the disappearance of another six children.



Photograph: Patrick Zachmann/Magnum

12-year-olds for sale on the streets

Girls as young as 12 are being sexually exploited on British streets while the men who buy and sell them for sex escape punishment, according to the children's charity Barnardo's.

The charity called for a tightening of the law to crack down on what they termed "child sex offenders" as children's rights campaigners prepare for a congress in Stockholm to demand that governments give courts the power to prosecute adults who travel overseas to have sex with children.

It was estimated last year that more than 5,000 underage girls are working as prostitutes in Britain, and the number caught soliciting has doubled since 1990. The Children's Society said that between 1989 and 1993 nearly 1,500 convictions were secured against under-18s for offences relating to prostitution. In the same period, 1,800 cautions were issued.

Barnardo's looked at 15 months' work which had been done with 45 girl prostitutes aged between 12 and 17 in their Bradford project, Street and Lanes. Nearly 30 had been under 16 and more than half had been raped. A further 12 said they had given into sex because of fear of violence.

Sara Swann, the project leader, said that attitudes must change so that these girls are seen as victims of child sex abuse rather than prostitutes.

"These girls do not go on the streets because they are drug addicts. They do not go on the streets to support their habit. They do not wake up one morning and start selling sex because they are sex mad," she said.

She said that they were ensnared by an older man - typically aged between 18 and 25 who lavished attention on them, made them dependent then forced them to work as a prostitute.

"The girls are locked into an abusive relationship when they are dependent on their 'boy-friend' who they believe loves them. He in turn offers the young women to his friends, sends them out on the streets or sells the girls on under the pretext that he loves them and knows what is best.

The girls have been raped, physically and emotionally abused and the majority have been infected with sexually transmitted diseases, and yet the abusers go unpunished," said Ms Swann.

Girls told of being beaten up by their "boyfriend", burned with cigarettes, locked in rooms and forced to have sex with their boyfriend's friends. Sexually transmitted diseases were common, with one 15-year-old so badly infected she is infertile.

Michael Jarman, director of child care for Barnardo's, said yesterday that existing legislation should be tightened up.

At present a girl can be branded a common prostitute if she is convicted twice for soliciting. While sex with a child under 13 carries life imprisonment, sex with a girl aged 13-16 or encouraging prostitution of a 13- to 16-year-old carries a maximum penalty of two years.

"Current maximum penalties for causing and encouraging the prostitution of girls under 16 and sexual intercourse and assault against children aged 16-18 are inadequate and need to be increased," said Mr Jarman.

Men turn to children for fear of Aids

The spread of HIV and Aids has led to increasing sexual exploitation of young people as men seek out younger girls whom they believe are likely to be free from the virus, writes Glenda Cooper.

The British charity Save the Children called on governments around the world to strengthen laws against child prostitution in advance of the first World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children which will take place in Stockholm from 27-31 August.

The charity in their report *Kids For Hire* said that there had been growing numbers of children involved in the sex industry throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America encompassing not only prostitution but also child trafficking and the use of children in pornography.

Poverty is a critical factor. Save the Children said, with some women and girls having no other recourse hut to fall back on prostitution. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has led to a steep rise in female unemployment and cutbacks in state services.

ately to estimate how many children are involved because of the illegal and hidden nature of the trade. But existing studies estimate that the number of child-sex workers in Colombia has doubled over the past three years, with a third aged under 14. In Thailand the estimated number of children in commercial sex work ranges from 20,000 to 800,000.

"It is clear [from workers in the field] that the problem has been getting worse," a spokeswoman said.

In countries where there is a high prevalence of HIV/Aids, men are increasingly seeking to have sex with young virgins free from the disease. In India as many as 20 per cent of girls in the tribal communities begin working in the sex trade between 11 and 13 and "this is instigated by the clients in order to avoid HIV infection".

The report said that every year thousands of children were sold, abducted or tricked into forced prostitution in countries other than their own.

It was estimated that at least 100,000 Nepalese girls were working as prostitutes in India at any one time, while there was extensive evidence of child trafficking among the countries of Central America.

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news

Arts news: Former director joins chorus of disapproval as cultural jamboree criticised for favouring established performers

Edinburgh Festival 'needs new direction'

DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

The harmony of the Edinburgh Festival has been shattered with the former director of the world's biggest arts jamboree arguing it needs to find a new direction.

The unprecedented criticism of the present administration was made in an interview with The Independent by Frank Dunlop, who ran the festival

from 1983 to 1991. In a side-swing at the current director, Brian McMaster, Mr Dunlop said he was "very admiring of people who have already achieved eminence."

The attack means that this year's Edinburgh Festival is fast becoming one of the most criticised in recent times.

First, in the inaugural Edinburgh Festival Lecture, Professor George Steiner claimed the festival had become too un-

wieldy, had lost its original purpose and should embrace the sciences as well as the arts.

Then Edinburgh impresario and gallery owner Richard Demarco lamented at a public debate the growing number of stand-up comics on the Fringe. And at the same meeting, Scottish publisher John Calder complained that the official Festival was under-promoted by the Scottish Tourist Office.

In addition, the prestige pro-

duction of the first week, *Elisnore*, Robert Lepage's adaptation of *Hamlet*, was cancelled at the last minute.

But Mr Dunlop's analysis is the most significant for the present festival. He said yesterday: "The festival is a fantastic event but in order for it not to get bogged down it has to keep looking for new directions." When he left the festival, Mr Dunlop left behind him a three-year plan, which has not

been acted upon, urging that the Festival become a "producing unit", commissioning and forming its own productions throughout the year, as well as just presenting ready-made productions from home and abroad.

He repeated the call yesterday, saying: "I proposed that the new Edinburgh Festival Theatre become the centre for the festival and that the festival run it all year round. I wanted

the festival to be more creative, be a production unit and bring people from countries all over the world. The festival has to deal with what it was created for, which was to promote international understanding."

Mr Dunlop said that the festival should create productions from scratch and then tour the world with them. "There should be technical workshops as well based around the Edinburgh Festival Theatre. I know that's

very ambitious, but I still think that would be a very good way to go." Professor Steiner had also called for the festival to mount workshops so that the public could see how great performances are developed.

Mr Dunlop refused to criticise his successor directly. "Brian was a very good appointment," he said, "because he was completely different from me. One of the really important things he has

done is extend the dance side." But he added: "I thought it was important to work with new people and young people, not just established artists. You do always need to experiment."

Mr McMaster said: "If you look at the festival over the last 49 years it is clear that each director's personal taste has to a large extent determined the programme. It is perhaps inevitable that another director will have different opinions."

Papers reveal secret trail of Nazi gold

MICHAEL STREETER

Two tons of Nazi gold were handed over to Britain and may have been claimed by high-placed Hitler sympathisers in this country after the Second World War, it was claimed yesterday.

Secret documents only now made public in the US government archives show that the gold, part of a 15-ton haul from the German Foreign Ministry, was sent to a British-controlled zone of north Germany in 1945.

According to a letter in 1948 written by Robert Kempner, a senior US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, the two tons were then "allegedly turned over to the British".

The 15 tons made up what was apparently called the Ribbentrop Gold Fund, after the German foreign minister, Joachim Von Ribbentrop, who had been ambassador in London before the war.

There is no record of whether this gold ever reached Britain but Labour MP Greville Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said there was concern about the gold's fate.

He said: "There is a possibility that this gold was sent by Ribbentrop to the British zone and got into the hands of his British friends, some of whom were very highly placed."

"He was a renowned hater of the British but he did have

friends here, upper-crust Hitler sympathisers. We may have opened a Pandora's box."

The news of the Ribbentrop gold follows revelations that the Allies, including Britain, knew that the Nazis had placed millions of pounds worth of gold in Swiss bank accounts, much of it stolen from Jews murdered in concentration camps.

There was also an Allied deal with the Swiss to split the proceeds. The Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Treasury have launched parallel inquiries into the matter. A Foreign Office spokesman said the latest disclosures would also be investigated.

The letter from Mr Kempner, unearthed by the World Jewish Congress in the US, states that, from his interviews with "several hundred" German diplomats during the course of his war crimes inquiries, he discovered that 11 tons of the Ribbentrop Gold Fund was "hurriedly" moved from Berlin in 1945, and that 6.5 tons went to an American-controlled zone in Austria, two tons to the British-controlled Schleswig-Holstein area, and three tons to the shores of Lake Constance, also American-controlled.

Addressing the political division of the US Army, Mr Kempner urged that the matter should not be dropped because of the potential "force of evil" such gold could constitute in the hands of the wrong people.

Forgotten for half a century, a village emerges from the tides of time



Shallow grave: The pump house of the hamlet of Ashopton, buried since 1943, is exposed by the falling waters of Ladybower reservoir in the Peak District. The water level has dropped by 13ft because of a continuing drought in the north of England, and reserves have shrunk from 6.25bn to 2.5bn gallons. Photograph: Brian Harris

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Employers take their pick of university graduates

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Students who want a job in law should go to Oxford but those who intend to make it in banking should head for the London School of Economics, according to a new survey of the universities companies prefer.

The survey of 257 major companies and ten subjects by the Performance Indicator project, an independent statistical survey, shows that Oxford and Cambridge, in that order, lead the field in law. They are followed by Durham, Bristol and Edinburgh.

In accountancy, finance and banking, however, companies rate students from the LSE highest, followed by Edinburgh, Manchester, Warwick and Kent. The two subjects covered in the survey are engineering and

technology, construction and civil engineering, languages, law, electrical engineering, sciences, computing, business, accountancy, finance and banking and economic and social sciences.

In sciences, Cambridge came top and Oxford fifth. Overall, Cambridge came top followed by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. The two were also first and second in last year's survey. Dr Cliff Pettifor, the project's director, said the vocational nature of the subjects surveyed might explain why Oxford had done less well.

The most improved university in employers' ratings was York which rose in almost every subject area. Newcastle and St Andrews are also going up.

The former polytechnics do not feature in the top ten for any

of the subjects but several are improving their ratings. De Montfort was fifth amongst the improvers and Oxford Brookes, Manchester, Metropolitan, Kingston and the University of Central England were also among those who did better than last year.

Another survey of employers' attitudes to universities, which aims to help students using the clearing system to secure a university places, shows only one new university, Glasgow Caledonian, in the top 25.

The survey of 105 leading companies was conducted by Mander Portman and Woodward tutorial colleges to offer students a guide to the likely status of degrees. It shows that employers have a "premier league" of traditional universities.

The table is headed by Oxford, followed by Cambridge,

Manchester, Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham and Edinburgh, (joint sixth) and Loughborough, Bristol, Durham, Ulster and Warwick are joint eighth. Almost half the companies said they had definite preferences about recruiting graduates. The tutorial colleges say it is important for students to know how universities are regarded when they are deciding whether or not it is worth re-taking their A-levels.

Employers appear to be focusing their recruitment efforts on a limited number of universities. However, new universities are competing by offering courses which help prepare students for particular jobs.

■ The Performance Indicator Project: Harlaxton College, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG32 1AG. £24.00. Written enquiries only.

Christ's tops Cambridge league

JUDITH JUDD

Christ's College heads this year's Tompkins league for final results at Cambridge with St John's, which was 20th last year, leaping into second place.

Clare College also did well, rising from 12th to fifth out of the 24 colleges. Churchill, however, was down to 22nd, after being in 15th place last year.

Emmanuel and Corpus Christi also fell back, from third and fourth respectively last year to 12th and 13th this.

New Hall, one of the remaining colleges for women, comes bottom.

King's, top for five successive years until last year, comes third.

The colleges' positions in the rankings, compiled for *The Independent* by Peter Tompkins, a London actuary, are calculated by giving each college five points for a first, three for an upper second, two for a lower second and one for a third.

The results are given in the table on the left as a percentage of the points that a college would have scored if everyone had had a first.

Mr Tompkins also compares two other Cambridge college

exam leagues. If all three are taken into account, the top three colleges are Christ's, Queens' and Trinity.

One of the other lists covers first and second year exams as well as finals. The right-hand column in the table shows the resulting positions.

The third ranking, which is not shown, covers the percentage of firsts. Christ's did best with 26.9 per cent, followed by Trinity on 26.2 per cent.

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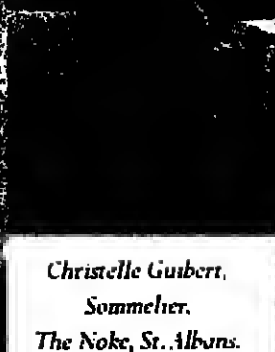
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THE CHECHEN CRISIS

'I don't know where we can run to'

Attack orders provoke vicious Kremlin battle

Thousands take the last exit from embattled Grozny

PHIL REEVES
MOSCOW

Tens of thousands of refugees were streaming out of Grozny yesterday as the commander of the Russian forces stuck by his plan to attack the city after tomorrow, fuelling a fierce dispute in the heart of the Kremlin over who is in charge of policy in the 20-month war.

As men, women and children struggled out of the wrecked city, more evidence emerged in Moscow that the conflict has precipitated a major political feud between the secretary of Russia's security council, Alexander Lebed, and hardliners who want to settle the war by force.

Infighting in the Kremlin erupted into the open yesterday when the security council issued a statement implying that officials had issued orders about the war without properly consulting Mr Yeltsin, apparently in an attempt to suppress Mr Lebed's attempts to negotiate peace.

As the crisis deepened, so too did signs that Mr Yeltsin's grip over his team is weakening. Aides of Mr Yeltsin, who have for days been hotly denying rumours that he is seriously ill with heart trouble, announced that the President had left by helicopter for a two-day break in Valdai, in the lake-dotted countryside of north-west Russia.

The council's statement also contained what amounted to an open appeal from Mr Lebed for the bombardment threatened by the acting Russian commander, General Konstantin Pulikovskiy, not to go ahead, warning of "heavy losses among the federal troops, massive deaths among the civilian population ... and a justified burst of resentment in the country". Recent ceasefire negotiations by the security council would be wrecked.

Earlier the Interfax news agency said that General Pulikovskiy had repeated his threat to start bombarding the city with artillery and aircraft missiles from Thursday, in an effort to drive out some 2,500-3,000 sep-

arist fighters who stormed in a fortnight ago, inflicting a humiliating defeat on Russia.

Although it was unclear on whose authority the commander was acting, he comes beneath the control of the Russian interior minister, Anatoly Kulikov, whose firing Mr Lebed has demanded on the grounds that he has misadvised the war. Mr Kulikov, who presided over Russia's farcical bombing of a Dagestani village in January, appears to have aligned himself with the "party of war" who believe the conflict can be settled by force.

However, the allegedly suspect orders referred to in the security council's statement appeared to be instructions to Mr Lebed - the president's envoy to the war zone - to restore Russian control over Grozny to the level of 5 August, the day before the Chechens launched their attack. The document "gave solid grounds to doubt" that the President took "a direct part in finalising the test of the order", it said.

It alleged that Mr Lebed was unaware of the preparation of the order, thus violating normal procedures, and claimed that a facsimile of the president's signature was used instead of his signing it. "The secretary of the security council assumes that no one is allowed to manipulate on behalf of the president," it said. The semi-official news agency Itar-Tass last night quoted the presidential press office saying that the order was fully in line with Mr Yeltsin's wishes.

Reports from Chechnya yesterday placed the number of refugees at more than 44,000, and they were said to be overwhelming local officials providing assistance. Some said the Russians had already begun bombing the city. The Chechen separatist spokesman, Movladi Udogov, alleged that the Russians had blown up a bridge over which the refugees were fleeing, killing about 100 civilians. The Russian authorities denied all knowledge of the attack.



Homeless: A distraught refugee flees Grozny as Russian soldiers move to retake the Chechen town. Photograph: Reuters

Thousands take the last exit from embattled Grozny

Grozny (AP) — A woman dressed only in a purple bathrobe ran down the dirt road, clutching her 8-year-old daughter by the hand and sobbing with terror as artillery shells exploded behind her.

"I don't know where I can run to. The Russians are shooting at everything and everyone," Yakhira Daudova cried. "Who will save us?"

Daudova said she didn't even have time to dress when she fled from Grozny yesterday. She held a small plastic bag containing the only possessions she and her daughter managed to grab before leaving. They joined thousands of other refugees fleeing Grozny down the bumpy dirt road that was the only major exit from the city.

The Russian army warned Grozny's residents on Monday to leave the Chechen capital before it began a major offensive to retake the city, captured by separatist rebels on 6 August. The military said the corridor would be open for 48 hours, but already fighting was raging around it yesterday.

Russian troops with armoured personnel carriers recaptured at least one point on the road after fierce clashes with Chechen fighters, who had controlled the route since taking the city. Refugees were caught between the two sides as shells exploded around them and machine-gun fire cut through the surrounding forest.

Mistaking a reporter for a soldier, a terrified elderly woman begged for mercy. "Please, please don't hurt me. I don't have any money or food. Please," she sobbed.

Several refugees claimed they had been robbed and beaten by Russian soldiers. One man displayed red welts across the back of his neck which he said were inflicted by soldiers.

Many of the refugees from the city are ethnic Russians. One after another, they burst into a stream of profanities about President Boris Yeltsin's government, which they blame for their suffering. "We must get

Terror and tears as warning of offensive sparks a mass exodus

rid of Yeltsin, this Russian leader who makes war on the Russian people," screamed Irina Sadova. "These are not soldiers. They are bandits."

As the firing flared around them, the refugees stumbled down the road, many were on foot, carrying bulging plastic bags and battered suitcases. Covered in sweat and panting from exhaustion, they trudged on under the blazing sun.

"Yesterday we were told there was a special corridor and we could leave. But there is fighting everywhere. I don't know where this crazy corridor is," said Isar Yisumov.

Children struggled along the road, many wearing summer sandals. A few cried but most were silent. During lulls in the fighting, columns of dilapidated cars and trucks dashed by, bearing white flags made from old sheets and towels to show they were civilian vehicles.

Small cars with 10 or more people crammed inside lurched alongside trucks with 50 or more people piled in the back. A few ramshackle buses rolled past, dozens of people clinging to the roof and the sides.

Grozny's one-time population of 400,000 has dwindled to below 100,000, according to one estimate. Many people had not wanted to leave Grozny because they had nowhere to go and no money to live on.

Others fled the city when the war started in December 1994. They had returned and begun rebuilding their lives in the capital when the Chechen fighters captured it earlier this month.

"We run for our lives. But how will we live? Maybe we will die in the fields with the animals," said one man, who said he was almost 70 and had no relatives or friends anywhere.

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How Russia got bogged down in a conflict without end

Dec 1994: Former Soviet air force General Dmitry Yevseyev, then regional presidential spokesman, declares Chechnya independent.
Nov 1994: President Boris Yeltsin declares "emergency" and sends troops to the capital, Grozny. They put out after three days.
11 Dec 1994: Russia sends troops to Chechnya to crush Dudaev's independence movement.
Jan 1995: Troops move into Grozny after bombardment which reduces it to ruins.
14 June 1995: Rebels storm Russian town of Budennovsk, 45 miles from Chechnya, killing scores of people and escaping to a hospital with hundreds of hostages.
18 June 1995: Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin negotiates with rebels by telephone. Russia orders halt to military operations in Chechnya.
19 Aug 1995: Yeltsin appoints Alexander Lebed his representative in Chechnya.
12 Aug 1995: Lebed agrees with Aslan Maskhadov, rebel chief of staff, to arrange truce, which holds.
14 Aug 1995: Yeltsin dissolves State Commission on Chechnya and gives Lebed sweeping powers to resolve conflict.
15 Aug 1995: Lebed, Maskhadov, meet, say they will seek an end to military confrontation.
19 Aug 1995: Russian commander, Konstantin Pulikovskiy, gives civilians 48 hours to leave Grozny and 35,000 deaths, they still believe the war can be solved by bombing the republic into submission. Pride is a driving force: they are determined to avenge the humiliating loss of Grozny a fortnight ago.
By contrast, Mr Lebed has compared the war with Russia's disastrous intervention in Afghanistan. Although he has modified his pre-election stance that the separatists should be allowed a referendum on independence, he acknowledges that force will never work - let alone force administered by Russia's ill-organised troops, against a determined people.
His opinions inspired the confidence of the Chechen leadership who were yesterday begging him to reverse General Pulikovskiy's "mad" assault. But the signs were not promising. Last night it looked as if an ill, absentee President and a public feud at the Kremlin is about to claim hundreds, perhaps thousands, more lives.

Ailing Yeltsin in hibernation away from dangerous feud

PHIL REEVES
MOSCOW

The war in Chechnya was over only about the desire of a small people to be independent of Russia's rough embrace. Darker forces - from clanish feuds to the predatory ambitions of superpowers - have long muddled the moral issues underlying this ugly conflict. But now it has become the focus of yet another struggle: a battle for the Kremlin itself.

There is no doubt that Boris Yeltsin is extremely unwell, despite attempts by his aides to convince the world that he is not suffering from further heart trouble. His staff insist he has been working for a few hours a day, until yesterday, when they said he had gone for a two-day break in the country.

But he has not been seen publicly since his brief, wooden performance at his inauguration almost a fortnight ago. Not for the first time, the President has gone into hibernation, leaving behind a dangerous feud over who runs the Chechen war and - ultimately - Russia.

When Mr Yeltsin appointed the blunt-spoken, politically naive Alexander Lebed as the secretary of a beefed-up Security Council two months ago, it was clear that a fight was looming in the Kremlin. Even before the ex-paratrooper arrived, he had secured the scalp of his arch-enemy, the Defence Min-

ister, Pavel Grachev, who was promptly fired. No one doubted the former general would continue to use his elbows to secure his position at the top. He quickly fell out with Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Prime Minister and one of his likely future rivals for the presidency, and Anatoly Chubais, Mr Yeltsin's chief of staff. But his latest battle - a demand for the sacking of the Interior Minister, Anatoly Kulikov, because of his inept handling of the Chechen war - has wider implications than personal political ambitions.

Mr Yeltsin's apparent response (it was relayed by his press department) was to slap down his up-start protégé, telling him Mr Kulikov would stay. But the Interior Ministry's reaction took a more frightening form: its officials in Grozny began handing out an ultimatum from General Pulikovskiy

mand of the forces on the ground in Chechnya, under the control of the acting federal commander, Konstantin Pulikovskiy. Mr Lebed felt his political efforts to settle the crisis would come to naught.

Mr Lebed's onslaught on Mr Kulikov came shortly after the President had placed Mr Lebed in charge of resolving the conflict, with powers to coordinate the activities of the divided federal forces in the war zone, principally the Interior Ministry, the Russian army and the new look KGB, the Federal Security Service. It was plainly a bid to enhance his powers, which he still saw as inadequate to solve the crisis. While the Interior Ministry remained in day-to-day charge of the combined com-

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SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Burundi's new Tutsi military strongman sacked the country's three most powerful military officers. Jean-Luc Ndirizeye said Pierre Buyoya, who seized power in a bloodless coup on 25 July, had dismissed the powerful chief-of-staff, the head of the gendarmerie, and the head of the military at the presidential palace. Analysts said the dismissals of the hardline officers may be a move to placate regional anger over the coup. *Reuter - Bujumbura*

Olympic bomb suspect Richard Jewell passed a lie detector test in which he denied any involvement in the deadly 27 July attack, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reported. A polygraph hired by the security guard's lawyers told the newspaper the test results showed Mr Jewell had nothing to do with the pipe bombing that left two people dead and more than 100 injured at downtown Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park. *Reuter - Atlanta*

The FBI wants to double its presence in foreign cities over the next four years, the *Washington Post* reported. Under the plan, FBI representatives would be stationed in 46 cities abroad, compared with 23 now, the newspaper said. The expansion would cost \$80m through the year 2000. The number of FBI special agents detailed to the foreign posts would rise from 70 to 129. *AP - Washington*

The US said it was expelling a Cuban diplomat in response to the expulsion of a US diplomat from Cuba. The State Department said Cuba revoked the visa last week of Robin Meyer, after accusing her of spying. The department said it had informed Cuba earlier on Monday that it was taking reciprocal action. *Reuter - Washington*

The Dalai Lama will meet South Africa's President Nelson Mandela in Cape Town on Thursday, a presidential spokesman said. The Tibetan leader said Mr Mandela's government could help to put pressure on China to negotiate the future of the country. *Reuter - Durban*

A Hong Kong dimsum chopped up his temptress boss into 11 pieces after she stripped off her clothes in his bedroom and tried to seduce him. Zeng Liangxin, 31, a worker from China who went on trial for the murder on Monday, told the court he killed the woman because he feared she would accuse him of rape after he had spurned her. *Reuter - Hong Kong*

Former US President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy have reluctantly listed their southern California ranch for sale, an aide said. Mr Reagan announced in 1994 that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and he and his wife have lived solely in their Los Angeles mansion since then. *Reuter - Los Angeles*

A group of 56 Chinese writers, former officials and academics has petitioned Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin, to save cultural relics from the gigantic Three Gorges dam which would flood huge tracts of land. About 130 historical sites, some dating to the Stone Age, could be flooded as soon as next year. *Reuter - Peking*

After decades of tolerating marijuana sales in local coffee shops, some Dutch towns have decided to go into the soft drugs business. Authorities in Delft are to open a new soft drugs shop on 1 September. Profits will be used to fund education campaigns on drug use. *AP - Amsterdam*

French Muslims in battle for Islam

Mosques at centre of power struggle. Mary Dejevsky reports

There are French tricolours flying from the minaret of the grand mosque at Evry. You can see them across the concrete-and-grass wasteland that separates the suburbs of Evry and Courcouronnes the moment you emerge from the station, 40 minutes south of central Paris. They are one of the few outward signs of the battle being waged for the hearts, minds, and wallets, of French Muslims.

At the entrance to the mosque, two notices have been posted. The first says: "Those who betray us are no part of us - Word of the Prophet." The second says: "Purge the Evry mosque and cultural centre of those who have used Islam for personal gain."

Last week, the grand mosque at Evry became the first in France to be "liberated", as the victorious faction claims, after a week-long "occupation". An

emergency meeting of the mosque's governing council ousted the director, a Moroccan technician called Khalil Merroun, while he was on holiday and installed a new director and management committee.

The new director is Laredj Nizar, Algerian-born, and a senior probation officer attached to the local prison. The power behind him, judging by the deference shown to her by other committee members, is Khadija Khali, a much-decorated Algerian war widow and French citizen, who is a member of the recently formed "High Council of French Muslims".

Precisely what the Evry mosque was "liberated" from can barely be divined from the words of committee members. "It was nothing personal. It was

simply a question of management. He never consulted, never called any assembly meeting, never constituted a management committee, wouldn't open the accounts to scrutiny," said Mrs Khali. "We will run everything with complete openness."

This mosque has been more than 14 years in the building, and it is still not finished," said the porter who showed me around. "Huge amounts of money have gone into it and now they are asking for more."

The scandal of the unfinished mosque is known throughout France. But the disgrace is felt keenly in Evry, because Evry also managed to commission, fund and build France's first new Catholic cathedral this century in less than half the time taken already by the mosque. A

renewed call for contributions last month was one of the last straw for the Muslims of Evry. "We felt the money was just vanishing," said the porter, signalling with his hands the probability of individuals lining their pockets. "The mosque must be finished."

As the flags on the minaret suggest, there is much more to the takeover of the Evry mosque than allegations against the ethics or work style of Mr Merroun. It is also about Frenchness and the perceived threat of fundamentalism.

In late June, the French government authorised the mosques of Paris, Evry and Lyons to contract out and supervise the slaughter of Halal meat themselves. Hitherto, it had been a government function. Because

the contracts are valuable, the decree was seen as a test of legitimacy for Muslim leaders. Would parishioners sanction a big new source of income for the existing management?

At Evry, a powerful group got together and said "no". At Paris and Lyons, mosque leaders have come under such pressure that they may not survive. More Machiavellian observers see the government's move as a deliberate attempt to destabilise the Muslim establishment in France.

Perhaps the real origins of the struggle for control of the French mosques, lie in the terrorist attacks of last year, when it was demonstrated that numbers of second-generation North Africans were finding solace in fundamentalism. The suspicion spread that certain mosques

and mullahs were using France as a recruiting ground.

Since the beginning of this year, voices have been raised - and encouraged by pro-government publications and lobbyists - in favour of a central structure for Islam in France, which would ensure a peaceful cohabitation with French culture. Those like Mrs Khali, Algerian born, but culturally French, had the encouragement they needed to "reclaim" French Islam for France.

The advantages to Muslims of having a central structure are clear. Catholics and Jews have a recognised hierarchy and an official voice. Muslims do not. For the authorities, the advantages are even more obvious. An unmanageable tangle of organisations and self-governed mosques would be replaced by a single hierarchy - and fundamentalism could be marginalised.

Bosnia's Big Bang alarms the local mayor

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Sokolac

Land explosions, each produced by four tons of high explosive, echoed across the quiet farmland of Serb controlled Bosnia yesterday. A chocolate-brown mushroom cloud, turning white at the top, soared 5,000 feet into the air. Even two miles away, the blast, filtered down the valley, ruffled the canopy on the back of a British army four-ton truck before the sound was heard.

In the face of growing confrontation with the local Serbs, the peace implementation force (I-For) was continuing its Operation Volcano, the destruction of an astonishing 400 tons of munitions found in an unauthorised Serb arms dump in the old schoolhouse at Marjetici, 25 miles east of Sarajevo. Yesterday the local mayor demanded - and got - discussions with Lieutenant General Sir Michael Walker, commander of Nato troops in Bosnia and deputy commander of I-For.

To ensure nothing went wrong, 2,000 I-For troops - mostly French and Italians, with some British and Portuguese - had been deployed to secure the area, transport the offending ammunition, ensure the evacuation of people and animals, and construct the excavations for its destruction.

Such detonations are taking place three times a day; and the local people are not happy. Milan Tupajic, the tough-looking mayor of Sokolac, the nearest town five miles to the west, arrived at the press conference organised by I-For to put his side of the story. On Monday, Mr Tupajic said the explosions at one of the two prepared sites had to stop because they would damage a deep underground aquifer which is important to the area's water supply. I-For immediately stopped detonations at the site in question, the more westerly site 1. But yesterday it continued to destroy the ammunition - anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, plastic explosives and small arms ammunition - at site 2, two kilometres north-east. Mr Tupajic was controlled but clearly determined. "Site 2 is in the same area", he said. "The water in one place is in the other place three hours later. I am an engineer but I am not a specialist. But you are soldiers. There are no geologists or hydrologists involved. I appeal to you again to postpone this operation."

I-For officers at the scene yesterday were flabbergasted that the Serbs would keep so much ammunition in such a place as a school house. "Four tons makes a hole 7 metres deep and 24 metres across", said Lt Col Max Marnier, a senior I-For spokesman. "Imagine what would happen if all 400 tons had gone off at once on the edge of a village". General Walker said the unauthorised ammunition dump was by far the largest found in Bosnia. For comparison, 3,600 tons was held in declared sites. The offence, he said, was "compounded by many violations", and for that reason I-For had decided to confiscate it and destroy it.

Three miles up a track, the Italians and French had prepared the six holes for the new blast in Operation Volcano. A hole at least two metres deep was dug, although old pits were also used. The area within a kilometre of the blasts had been cleared of people and animals. "We had some trouble with cows and sheep", said Colonel Frere, the French expert in charge of the detonations. "But they obeyed us, and went away."



Bowing to the might of the law: Students at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea, forced into submission yesterday after riot police stormed the building where they had been staging a protest, and overwhelmed them. Photograph: AP

Iraq behind bread riots, says Hussein

Patrick Coburn
on a conspiracy theory which has no believers

Karak - King Hussein appeared in a confident, almost jaunty, mood as he blamed Iraq for being the hidden hand behind the riots which followed the decision of his government to double the price of bread.

"The situation is wholly under control," the King told Jordanians in a television interview on Sunday night. "Everything has been very quiet in the country." As for the rioters, who had burned banks and public buildings as symbols of government authority, they "were either educated in Iraq or had sympathies towards Iraq".

The theory of the Iraqi conspiracy finds few believers in Karak, where the riots started after Friday prayers last week, or anywhere else. A local boy had a simpler explanation of what happened. He told a reporter: "Karak is a poor town. I earn 70 Jordanian dinars (£70) a month to support my mother and brother. How can I buy bread?"

Although he is one of the most skilful political players in the Middle East, it is mysterious that King Hussein should appear so confident. For the riots are only the latest of a series of political and economic blows to hit Jordan over the last decade. Sandwiched between Israel, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, the kingdom, with its 4.2 million people, and no oil, is always the weakest player in the region.

Its economic prosperity is peculiarly vulnerable to diplomatic setbacks because it is dependent on foreign aid and remittances from Jordanians working abroad. Since the Gulf crisis, foreign aid from the US and the Arab oil states has largely dried up because of Jordan's refusal to join the alliance against Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, after his invasion of Kuwait. At the same time, Palestinian workers with Jordanian passports, many of whom have been residents in



Breadline: Khalaf Ahmad, 52, buys loaves in Karak yesterday during a two-hour curfew. Photograph: AP

Karak for decades, have been forced to go back to Amman.

Two initiatives in the last two years have failed to change this situation. In 1994, King Hussein signed a peace treaty with Israel. This raised expectations of a "peace dividend" in Jordan in the shape of foreign aid from the US and Europe, as well as more investment. Neither has been forthcoming in the quantities hoped for by Jordanians.

In 1995, in the wake of the flight of General Hussein Kamel al-Majid, President Saddam's son-in-law, to Jordan, the King began to shift away from his previously friendly relations with Iraq. Restrictions were tightened on the road which is Iraq's lifeline across Jordan's eastern desert. Iraqi opposition groups were allowed to base themselves in Amman.

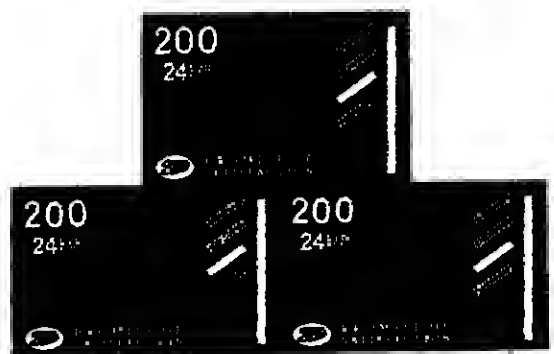
Again, little aid was forthcoming. King Hussein's policies towards Israel and Iraq may have made strategic sense by bringing him closer to Washington and Tel Aviv, but they were never popular. The Israeli ambassador to Amman spent months trying to find somebody

who would root him a house. Even Jordanian dentists said they would not treat Israelis. As for Iraq, although President Saddam has lost the overwhelming popularity he enjoyed in Jordan on the eve of the Gulf war, he is still respected.

Jordan has inflicted more damage on Iraq's leaders than vice-versa over the last year. Not only has King Hussein said it is time for President Saddam to go, but in June Jordan was involved in an abortive conspiracy among army officers in Baghdad which ended in widespread arrests and executions. The Iraqi National Accord, an opposition group favoured by the CIA and Jordanian security and based in Amman, admitted its involvement.

Jordan's shift against Iraq has made it fearful that President Saddam might retaliate. Vengeance is often part of his policy. But it is highly unlikely that Iraq's leader had anything to do with the riots in Jordan. Iraq has no alternative route to the road running through Jordan. If it comes, Iraqi retaliation is more likely to take the subtle form of a bomb, or a bullet.

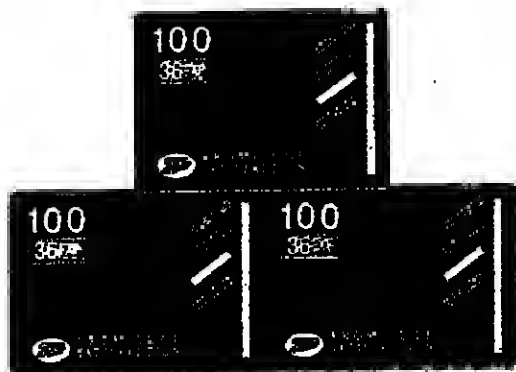
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2 sport

Christie's European ambition has mixed reception

Athletics
SIMON TURNBULL

Linford Christie's reluctance to go, gently or otherwise, into that good night was welcomed with "mixed feelings" yesterday by the man in charge of Britain's track and field team.

Games of Christie's desire to extend his international shelf-life beyond what was billed as the captain's last hurrah for Britain, the Bupa Challenge match at Gateshead on Monday night.

British athletics publicity machine churning out pre-meeting hype about the veteran's international farewell, which undoubtedly helped to sell all but 400 of 11,700 tickets.

Not since 1985, when Lincoln Asquith finished fourth in Moscow, has Britain picked a different sprinter for that particular job. Though Christie's reputation stopped him short of actually saying it, Arnold would not be disappointed to see a fresh face, such as that of Ian Mackie.

John Macdonald, father of Linsey Macdonald, Britain's youngest-ever track and field Olympic medalist, when Christie signed an autograph for him after a meeting in Edinburgh six years ago. Since returning from Atlanta, where he qualified for the 100m semi-finals, Mackie has been invited to join Christie's management company, Nuff Respect.

He matched strides with the Olympic champion, Donovan Bailey, until the final 20 metres of the 100m at Gateshead, missing his personal best by 0.01sec with a time of 10.25.

"I have got mixed feelings," Arnold conceded. "When Linford does go we'll miss him. I think people in this country don't realise what he's done. But I'd like him to go out in a dignified fashion and we've seen the best from him."

problems this year. The older you get, the quicker you get injured and the slower you are to recover. It's also difficult for him to leave the regime he's had. It's the same with Ron Roddhan, his coach. They'll have to carry him out of Thames Valley Harriers in a coffin. Linford's the same. "He loves the sport and he's finding it hard to let go. There has to be time, though, for the youngsters to be set free." That time, it seems, is not yet nigh.

Arsenal made to wait for Wenger

Football

Arsenal yesterday refused to officially confirm that 46-year-old Arsene Wenger is to become their latest manager. An announcement was expected from Highbury but the north London club have had their plans put on hold by the Frenchman's current club, Grampus Eight, with the Japanese seemingly unwilling to play ball over the long-term future of their coach.

Wenger admitted: "It will be very soon, but I cannot say exactly when. Perhaps early next week. We have agreed, but they [Grampus Eight] want more time."

He also stated that he was not happy to see the back of the former Bolton boss. He also stated that he was not happy to see the back of the former Bolton boss.

Anxious wait for Mabbutt stand-in

Tottenham's manager, Gerry Francis, hopes Stuart Nethercott will be fit to play at the centre of defence against Derby tonight in the absence of the team captain, Gary Mabbutt.



David Holding breaks the 100 metres T53 world record in Atlanta yesterday

Rangers ready to reap reward

Peter van Vossen could be about to fire Rangers into a Champions' League place, having admitted that he wanted to quit Ibrox during the summer.

With four goals in his last two matches, the Dutch forward could be a key player today when the Scots play the Russians at Anfield.

him if he thought I was a good player and he said I might be, but I had to prove it.

Manchester City, who hope to sign another Arsenal striker, Paul Dickov, for £750,000, are ready to cut their losses on Scottish striker Gerry Creaney and sell him to Oldham for £300,000.

Grey strikes back with record

Paralympics

Tanni Grey took revenge for her 100 metres defeat by Leann Shannon by beating the 13-year-old American to retain her 800m title in a world record time of 1min 55.11sec.

Grey had unsuccessfully appealed against Shannon's inclusion in the 100m T52 because of the steel rods supporting her spine, which allow her to be more upright and thus in a position of more strength over the shorter distances.

Grey's medal was one of four won by Britain on the third day of the Games in Atlanta, taking Britain to third in the overall medals table with 11 gold medals, 12 silver and 11 bronze.

Also on the track, David Holding won the 100m T53 in a world record of 14.45sec and Stephen Payton took the 100m T57.

Hamilton anger at Ukraine officials

The Northern Ireland manager Bryan Hamilton has criticised the Ukrainian authorities for keeping him in the dark during the build-up to the World Cup qualifying match between the sides in Belfast next week.

Hamilton is furious that the Irish Football Association were not informed about a warm-up match the Ukraine played against Lithuania in Kiev last week - they won it 5-2 - from which he could have sized up the Windsor Park opposition.

But I'm not giving up. I think I'm close to finding another source who can come up with more extensive coverage of the Ukraine in action. I am bringing my squad together next Tuesday and I'd like to have more material on the Ukraine to show them.

Hamilton has recalled Leicester's Neil Lennon, French-based striker Phil Gray and Coventry's close-season signing Michael O'Neill to join up with the players who held European champions Germany to a 1-1 draw in Belfast in May.

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Today's Number 16

The number of goals conceded - without scoring once - in the last five matches by Ajax, who begin their defence of their Dutch title today. They have been beaten by Milan, Juventus, Deportivo La Coruna and Chelsea. Their latest loss was a 3-0 defeat by Dutch rivals PSV Eindhoven in the Johan Cruyff Shield at the weekend.

The day Torquay began their climb to the top

BEING THERE

We now know the Gulls as European champions, of course, but it all started in August 1996. Jonathan Rendall tells the story

We were sitting in the glass-fronted restaurant they have at the top of the San Siro, Kevin Hodges, the Torquay manager, still cradling the European Cup a good two hours after the final whistle.

The nationals had been shut out for a change; on Hodges' orders, only the local papers were allowed to stay in - that was me and Simon Mills from the *Western News*. It was a strange feeling, being a so-called "local" in what has become an international phenomenon like Torquay. Simon and I exchanged looks as if to say, how long will this last? Not even into next season's Champions' League, our eyes decided, but who could really blame the Gulls.

Looking out at the starry night sky over Milan, Hodges stroked the cup and said: "Unbelievable. Five years ago we were bottom of the League, and now this. It makes you think."

Behind Hodges and I, at the San Siro's flamingo-crystal bar, the Torquay chairman, Mike Bateson, stood his players a round of beers. Hodges waved them over. We were joined also by Dave, Torquay's long-suffering fan from old days and now the team's spokesman on European trips. He was wearing his trademark Ronnie Kray specs. "How you managed it with a crap ref like that, I don't know," Dave said with mock ruefulness. "No, I'm pleased for you, Kevin. I really am, mate."

One by one the players touched the cup, among them Norbert Lenk, the ex-Fortuna Düsseldorf and Roma striker, heir to Kinsmann, who had been Hodges' club-record buy the previous close season. Yet the presence of Lenk was misleading. Torquay's five-season rise from the spectre of the Conference to the Premiership title and, now, the Champions' League, has of course been well documented. But it is still startling to recall that the nucleus of the present team were all there during those far-off Third Division days at Plainmoor.

The remaining players - Ray Newland, Jon Gittens and Rodney Jack - touched the cup gingerly, as if it might still be an illusion and suddenly they would be transported back to the Nationwide League. But they needn't have worried. Their credentials are now known world-wide: Newland, England goalie and saviour of the night in Milan; Jack, scorer of the winner and now the most highly rated player in Europe, mobbed for autographs even by the Milan fans; and Gittens...



There's only one Johnny Gittens: the Gulls faithful at Plainmoor on the day that Torquay United began their incredible journey to the summit of European football

Photograph: Christopher Jones

For Gittens, it is a bitter-sweet moment. He knows that next year he will be wearing the colours of Inter, the team he has just conquered.

"It's amazing," Bateson said. "I remember back in '96 all the talk was why didn't we get a sell-on fee when Lee Sharpe went from Man U to Leeds. Now it seems like, well, total peanuts, to be honest."

I asked Hodges what the turning point had been. Without hesitation, he answered: "Plainmoor, Saturday 17 August 1996." "Almost in unison, Gittens and Jack murmured "Lincoln City", with far-away looks in their eyes. Although Newland said, "D'you have to bring that up?" Hodges would not be swayed from his theme.

"That was the one," he said. "The key. Remember we'd only stayed in the League because Stevenage's ground wasn't up to scratch."

"I remember," Bateson interjected with an amused shrug. "And don't forget Lincoln had beaten us 5-1 the season before," Hodges went on. "So it was crucial." He paused enigmatically before adding: "Absolutely crucial."

We thought back to that day, our remembrances coming out. The European Cup lay on one of the chairs between us. Even the Milanese waiters were crowding round listening, and at the end Norbert Lenk said to Hodges: "You know, boss, I really wish I had been there."

Plainmoor was very different in those days, of course. There was a kiddies' playground where the Paul Baker Stand and Conference Centre is now, and you could find a parking space within 200 yards of the ticket office. Not that there were any tickets. This was one of the old "no-tickets" games, to save on the printing. I walked up from town to Plainmoor with some of the Lincoln fans, who were famously hard to impress. The Imps had just

played host to Newcastle and their then-record buy Alan Shearer in a pre-season game, and the Imps fans hadn't been impressed at all.

"It's Andy Cole all over again," one said. "And he was worth about as much as a bag of coal."

"Forget the Toon Army, loony tunes is what it is," said another, with what turned out to be oracle-like accuracy, given Newcastle's relegation that term.

Our English Riviera didn't impress them, either, and it was clear that only a repeat of the 5-1 thrashing would compensate them for the long journey. "I can't wait to get home to Lincoln," one Imp fan confided. "I feel like I've been here years already."

Indeed, in public even Hodges was cautious about his players' chances before the match. "Most of them know what to expect and the most important thing is for them to concentrate throughout the whole game," he said. "I've been told Simon Mills in that morning's News."

I joined the super-fan Dave to watch the teams warming up. He was wearing the Ronnie Kray even then, but, unsurprisingly, his features lacked the serene quality that they have since attained. Lincoln played a brutal long-ball game that required tremendous fitness, and we watched with some foreboding as the Imps players performed a series of sprints, despite the almost Mediterranean heat.

"Obviously, you get bitter when you're bottom of the League," Dave said. "But we've got to remember that if it wasn't for Mike Bateson coming in, this club probably wouldn't exist. And if Dean Whitehouse hadn't missed two open goals when he was

on loan from Wimbledon, we might have turned things around."

It is sobering to recall that Dave then fondly invoked the, to him, crowning moment in Gulls history up to that point: 1990, the Leyland DAF Trucks Trophy at Wembley, and the 4-1 defeat by Bolton. "We took 20,000 to Wembley for that one," Dave said wistfully.

"And where are they now?" I observed, surveying a Plainmoor crowd that I estimated at around 2,645.

"If we knew that we wouldn't be in all the trouble we're in," Dave said.

Ripples of concern were felt among the Gulls faithful as Ray Newland, deputising for the now unfairly forgotten Rhys Wilmut, fumbled a practice corner. An agitated Newland then let a dribbling shot from the

Worse, the referee had already booked two key Torquay men, not only Gittens but also Baker himself, after an innocuous challenge which sent an Imps defender down as if shot. "He's obviously been training at Old Trafford," a Gulls fan quipped as the Lincoln No 3 made a miraculous recovery and trotted back.

Incredibly, the northerner Baker, his 33-year-old blond crop glistening in the sun, was not even a definite Gulls player that day. "He's having to commute," Dave said. "He's got to find a house for his wife, and it's not easy. Where he comes from 40 grand virtually buys you a mansion. Travel is our worst enemy."

So incensed were the Gulls supporters by the card-happy ref that they failed to notice the helping hand he had in the first Torquay goal. As the Gulls prepared to take a free-kick by the opposing corner flag, referee D'Urso pointed out that the said infraction had actually taken place some five yards nearer goal, on the edge of the Imps' box.

From the newly placed kick, Gittens slot home with a sweet side-foot. "There's only one Johnny Gittens," sang the crowd. But failure, as they say, breeds the expectation of it, and the mood was far from cheering at half-time as we queued for our then-traditional portion of chips: crisp on the outside, creamy in the middle and grease almost non-existent in the old handy cardboard cones - still the best chips I have experienced in domestic or indeed international stadiums. "I hope you're going to put the crispness of the ref in your report," Dave said rather unfairly as we retook our places.

The rest is history. Newland's nerves were suddenly exposed when, going to tip over a speculative punt forward, he instead missed the ball and collided with the rear stanchion. This time the Imps did not miss their cue. High ball after high ball was curled in, their bulky rearguard missing in the Gulls' box. Another missed cross and... it was 1-1.

At this point, most in the crowd would have settled for the draw. The whistles were going up from as early as the 76th minute. But Hodges still had his dream. And at that precise moment he executed the masterstroke that would realise it. Off came the stalwart Gary Nelson, and on came Rodney Jack.

Of course, Jack was only a kid back then. No one knew quite what to expect as he jogged on with his dreadlocks bouncing in the summer air. "Nice haircut," one Gulls regular observed. "But has the kid got the legs?"

We did not have that long to find out - 14 minutes and 32 seconds, by my reckoning. It was the first minute of injury time. A languid back-pass from the resigned Imps seemed safe enough as it trickled back to their under-rated keeper Barry Richardson. Suddenly, from nowhere, Jack appeared on the ball. Two defenders had galloped back. Jack dummed one, then shimmied past the other and shot.

The game Richardson got a foot to it, but this was just a passing carous as the ball kissed the back of the net. Ref D'Urso blew for time. Hodges leapt from the dug-out. The crowd erupted. It seemed like a lot of people back then. And the Gulls faithful linked arms three-abreast and went out past the playground singing "Rodney Jack, Rodney Jack, Rodney Jack..."

Of course, those singing lads are now mere specks in the sea of faces you see at the new Plainmoor. But as Hodges and I ambled out of the San Siro with Bateson, Dave, Gittens, Newland, Jack and Lenk, the Gulls manager paused and confided: "You know, talking about those days, the funny thing is you almost want to go back to them."

"Really, Kevin?" I said. "Nah," Kevin chuckled, and then, quite understandably rejecting my request for a lift, sped off in the limo towards the airport.

'Unbelievable. Five years ago we were bottom of the League, and now this. It makes you think'

The mouthy mayor and his mattress boys

SPORT IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Atletico Madrid's owner is no stranger to scandal, writes Elizabeth Nash

by surviving an entire season. Gil, who gulps down eight fried eggs at a sitting, has in nine seasons devoured 20 Argentine, English and Spanish managers. Some lasted only days. One had a nervous breakdown. Another said the players, ruled by fear, walked a daily tightrope over a lake of crocodiles.

Jesus Gil, 63, was born in Burgo de Osma, 100 miles north-east of Madrid. At 17, he shared a boarding house with a priest and 19 prostitutes,

keeping the establishment's accounts in lieu of paying rent. He mended garbages, then bought and sold lorries and eventually property.

In 1969, an apartment block he built in Segovia collapsed, killing 58 people. It had no plans, no architect and no surveyor, and the cement was barely set. He was jailed for criminal negligence for five years in 1971, but after 18 months the dictator Franco pardoned him. He borrowed money and started again, some say with an enduring chip on his shoulder.

Marbella, glitzy playground for rich Arabs and Russians, with possibly the densest concentration of powder-blue fringed suede cowboy boots in Europe, caught his fancy in 1979 when he attended a local weight-loss clinic. He homed in with his property deals with such disregard for the regulations that in 1988 the Socialist town council declared him *persona non grata*. His way round that was to stand for mayor. He created his Independent Liberal Group (GIL) party and won a landslide victory in 1991.

He promised to clear prostitutes off the streets and corral them into a purpose-built "whore-odrome", and adopted Franco's rule of boosting public thermometers a degree or three to encourage tourists.

One night in August 1991, he descended upon Marbella's harbour-side bars with his bodyguards and started haranguing the youngsters. "What a drink-sodden face you've got today," he bellowed. "How much have you spent on drugs today? You're drowsy and I'm going to get rid of you. Drunkards! Slugs!" Several people were injured in scuffles and a police car was burnt.

Gil's business deals have so prospered that he claimed last month to have lost all respect for money because he had "too much". He bought a mausoleum in Madrid's Alameda cemetery with a garden and room for 69 bodies, and favours the epitaph: "Here lies a brave man who laughed at imbeciles."

Fans of the *Colchomeros* ("mattress boys"), so-called for the red-and-white striped mattress-ticking that inspired Atletico's strip, don't mind the bragado. While Gil is on a winning streak, they love him.

SPORTING VERNACULAR

No 10 COACH

As in sport, so in language, there are no winners without losers. If "coach" is the rising star, its defeated adversary is "manager". There is a cruel Darwinian logic governing the sporting lexicon: managers are a dying breed, while coaches are multiplying like rabbits.

The life of the word "coach" in Britain falls into two distinct periods. Before and After Venables. In the managerial golden age of 1966, no one would ever think of calling Sir Alf Ramsey "coach". He was manager as God. A coach was something the England team travelled to Wembley in. The team had a coach or coaches on the field, too, and worthy men they were, running on with buckets and sponges. But the manager - the gnatcatcher, the maestro - was there to supervise tactics, strategy, formation, destiny.

Even Graham Taylor was still a manager. Then Terry Venables took over and "manager" was out and "coach" was in. Maybe it had something to do with potential legal complications. "Coach" had the virtue of deniability: if it all blew up, Venables,

like some *Mission Impossible* agent, could be thrown to the sharks or the Segura - hey, he was never really England manager anyway! Maybe it was modernisation. Taylor was the Stakhanovite, with his emphasis on sheer industry and productivity. Venables would give creativity and flair a chance. There was never any question of Glenn Hoddle becoming manager - he went straight in as coach. Coaches are taking over. Managers are not sexy.

The word is an American re-import. There is a justification for this evolution. A coach is more hands-on, he does not fear getting his boots dirty. A coach wears a tracksuit, not a suit and tie. Coach is classless.

Personally, I regret the passing of "manager", with its connotations of Ramseysian wisdom and vision and dignity. There is an element of nostalgia in this. But there is another drawback to the Americanism. In the television soap opera *Cheers*, "Coach" was an amiable, ageing imbecile.

Andy Martin

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Counties must put England first

The Actfield Report is not an awe-inspiring document. This should not be seen as a criticism of the luminaries in the working party more that there was actually not that much which could be done to improve the management of English cricket.

One essential fact was grasped, however, which was that this management must be free from the sometime parochial interests and influence of the first-class counties. Hence their cornerstone recommendation of an England Management Committee to run all aspects of England's international cricket. In quote from the report: "The working party recommends that the EMC be delegated by the TCCB [Test and County Cricket Board] to decide on and implement all aspects of the selection, management and

administration of England teams."

Autonomy for the EMC is essential if it is to work. It is the sort of power which I believe Raymond Illingworth and Ted Dexter both sought and which often comes with an authority of one. Yet the working party recognised the inherent difficulties of this dictatorial approach and instead opted for a committee, but one which could be autocratic in its powers because of its independence from the TCCB. It would have "delegated" powers for "all aspects".

Now we find, however, that on the point which most players would regard as the most important, the TCCB have clipped this new committee's wings. The chairman of the EMC will not have the right to withdraw players from county matches if he deems it necessary.

Tim Curtis, chairman of the Professional Cricketers' Association, says the Actfield Report is a step in the right direction

Dominic Cork will continue to average playing two days out of three throughout the year whilst his Australian counterpart, Glenn McGrath, will play only one out of three.

Our own experience at Worcester this year does not help my argument, in that Graeme Hick's omission from our line-up for one game did not lead to renewed and refreshed success for him. However, Worcester in an enlightened manner recognised the pre-eminence of the national side. Only if this spirit proliferates will we bridge

this county versus country divide and improve our national team's chances of success.

Other aspects of the report address this same central problem of club pulling in the opposite direction from country. I am delighted to see in the report that, whilst the TCCB will continue to nominate candidates to sit on the various committees and act as selectors, the EMC retains the right to select from outside these nominations. This, combined with the payment of selectors, should ensure the best possible people are involved. It is not

simply a question of people being put forward who have served their time in a county administration and deserve a chance or who, through being retired or personal financial circumstances, have the time and opportunity to fulfil such roles. The basis for selection for these crucial roles will be broadened and quality should emerge as the determining factor.

Further to this, the continuity of the EMC's selection process, between Under-19, 'A' and full England teams should improve matters greatly, particularly in the 'A' team where too often it seems local county favourites have been rewarded after a good season. Again, the county interests, a pat on the back for having done well, come before a hard-headed, forward-thinking ap-

proach to selection and management.

In this question of selection and the central concept of a management committee the Actfield Report grasps a significant nettle. In other areas it is notably woolly, spawning four committees to implement its various plans, and I would not have thought that the process for selecting the England scorers for each tour worthy of quite so much debate.

Perhaps the wooliness was an attempt to disguise and slip through the crucial point of the independence of the EMC. It didn't work. The TCCB's refusal to allow the EMC ultimate powers is disappointing evidence that the differences between club and country will continue to undermine our international efforts.

**Lawless
Essex still
looking
dangerous**

THE WEEK AHEAD

James Whitaker, hoping to lead Leicestershire to their first County Championship for 21 years in his first season as captain, reckons five factors will determine one of the closest and most fascinating title races.

The winners, he believes, will be the side whose progress is least disturbed by injuries and England call-ups, and who find favourable pitches and enjoy the best luck with the toss and the weather.

What he did not mention was the effect of call-ups to the Australian side currently preparing for the Singer Cup in Sri Lanka, which may well have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of two of the challenging group. The limited-overs tournament, which runs until 7 September, deprives Yorkshire of Michael Bevan and Essex of Stuart Law.

It may be argued that Yorkshire's dream is already dead, the erstwhile leaders having dropped 27 points behind with four consecutive defeats. This may be true, but a recovery would have been more likely with Bevan present.

In the case of fifth-placed Essex, however, the loss threatens to undermine their best form of the season, a run of four consecutive Championship victories, which has prompted those sceptical of the Midlands challenge represented by Derbyshire and Leicestershire to speculate that the biggest threat to Kent and Surrey may come from Chelmsford.

Essex have been impressive lately, with two victories by an innings and another by 292 runs among their recent haul. Law, the 27-year-old all-rounder from Brisbane, has made a major contribution, scoring 363 runs at an average of almost 73 in this period, lifting his aggregate for the season in first-class matches to 1,361 runs - 43 more than Graham Gooch.

It is in Essex's favour that they finish their programme with two fixtures at headquarters, against spent Sussex and unthreatening Glamorgan, by which time Law will be available again, if required. In the meantime, however, Essex must negotiate what they anticipate will be more difficult matches against Gloucestershire at Colchester, starting tomorrow, followed by Yorkshire at Headingley and Warwickshire at Edgbaston.

Essex have a 20-point gap to close on the surprise leaders Derbyshire and 18 on second-placed Kent but have a match in hand on both. Dean Jones's team, who went top when victory over Nottinghamshire on Monday gave them six wins in eight rounds, take a breather now before returning to face Worcestershire at Chesterfield, Somerset at Taunton, then Warwickshire and Durham at Derby.

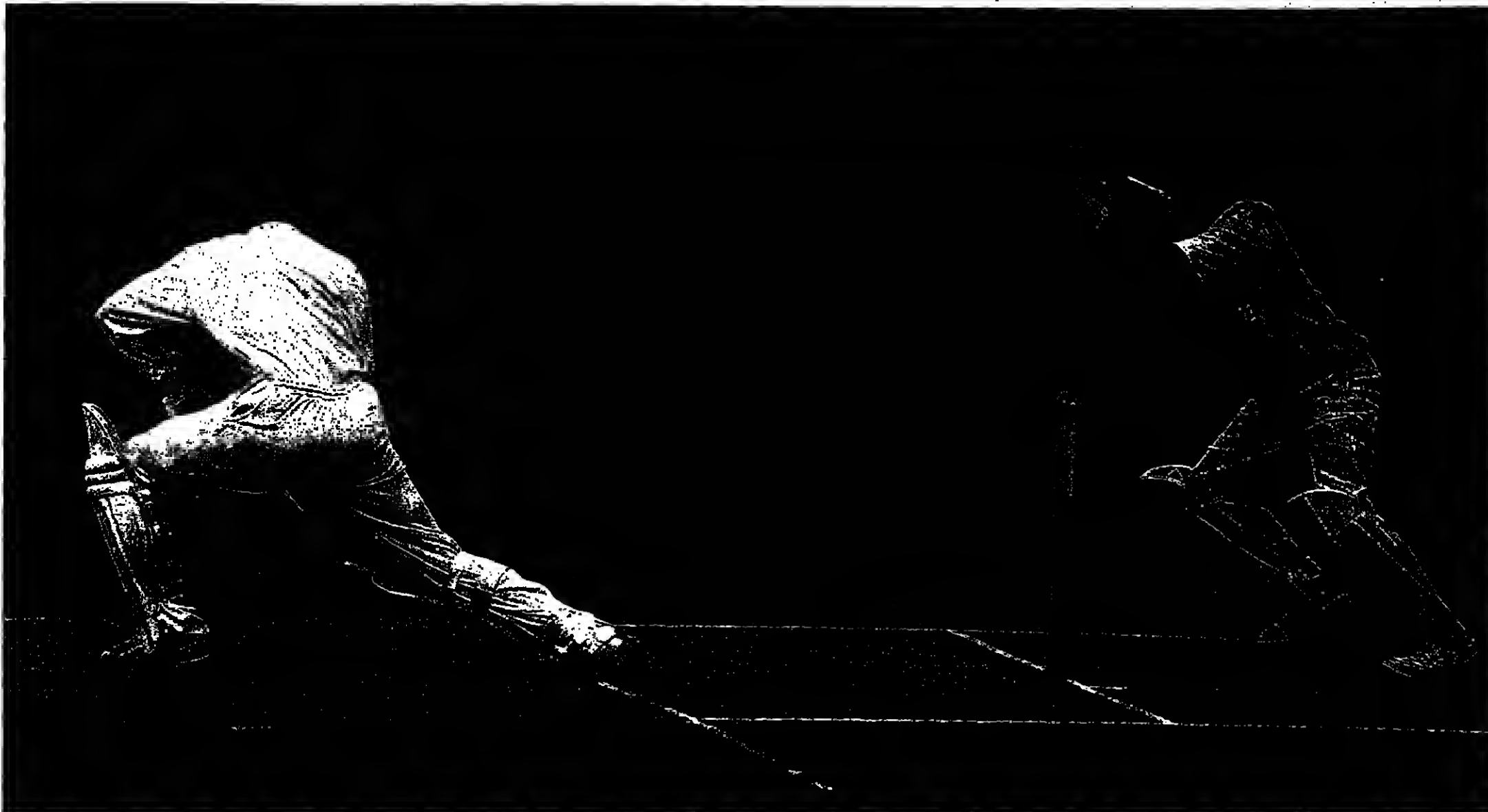
Kent, who would have had a comfortable lead had rain not deprived them of a probable win at Derby in late July, go to Cardiff tomorrow and meet Nottinghamshire at Tumbleidge Wells next week before sitting out a round, concluding against Hampshire at Canterbury and Gloucestershire at Bristol. Having suffered the ignominy of the wooden spoon last season, Kent's coach, Daryl Foster, believes amends can be made in the most handsome fashion, but confidence is also high in Surrey (third) and Leicestershire (fourth), each of whom, like Essex, have five matches left.

Surrey, at Trent Bridge tomorrow, lose Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe to Test calls but will probably ask Chris Lewis to dash north if not required at The Oval. The Texaco Trophy may mean all three missing next week's clash with Warwickshire at The Oval, where Northamptonshire and Worcestershire are also due before the season is out, with Glamorgan at Cardiff in between.

Leicestershire, for whom Whitaker is poised to return from a calf muscle injury, take on Hampshire at Grace Road, starting tomorrow, with two more matches at their headquarters, against Somerset and Middlesex, sandwiching trips to Nottinghamshire and Durham.

Sunday's AXA Equity and Law League programme finds second against first when Nottinghamshire and Surrey meet at Trent Bridge, while Worcestershire (fifth) and Warwickshire (fourth) clash at New Road. Third-placed Yorkshire - on equal points with Surrey and Nottingham - face Lancashire at Headingley.

Jon Culley



Bazid Khan, of Pakistan, is caught behind by the Indian wicketkeeper, Pardeep Chawla, in the Under-15 World Cup final at Lord's yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallen

Lord's given a glimpse of the future

Irony, isn't it, that while the great and the good of county cricket gathered at Lord's to peddle their solipsisms and sophistries in shuttered chambers, the future of the game was right out here for all to see. And it wasn't English. It was Asian, with India and Pakistan contesting the final of the Lombard World Challenge - the under-15 World Cup. Both had come to Lord's unbeaten in the two-week tournament.

Irony? Certainly. But not surprising. I've played Taps for English cricket too many times to be blowing my own trumpet, but I wrote back in 1991 that cricket was going this way. Not many will have read it then - and probably no one connected with the running of English cricket.

Commenting on a projected tour of Sri Lanka by Australia and New Zealand in July and August that year, I wrote: "Such a programme means that the mid-year months are no longer an English preserve and opens the way for a power base incorporating the Asian and Australasian countries, with South Africa close enough to support it. Such an alliance would threaten England's traditional hegemony."

What we witnessed yesterday, however, concerned more than the

balance of power within the game. It concerned the whole approach to what cricket is. It can be the manifestation of a nation's spirit, and from the way India and Pakistan, and to some extent Sri Lanka, have played in this tournament, the teenage Asian spirit is an unfettered bird compared with the sons of no-nonsense Anglo-Saxon stock.

So with their supporters yesterday - you don't hear noise like this at a county game. With their flags and chants this could have been Calcutta or Lahore, rather than Lord's. They were raising the roof of the Mound Stand with their impassioned "zindabad (long live) Pakistan" choruses and their shrilling and whistling for every run scored and every ball fielded.

My first sighting of India, two weeks ago beside the Thames in Ted-

As two Asian countries contest the final of the Under-15 World Cup, Graeme Wright examines the threat to English hegemony

dington, was of slim-line swing bowlers bending the ball away from the English batsmen with all the skill of a Srinath or Prasad. There was also a slow left-arm in a maroon turban to remind memories of the days when spin was the kernel of the Indian attack. Their batsmen, as they showed against South Africa in the semi-finals, could be unstoppable. Needing 263 to win, and reduced to 9 for 2, they came out with bats blazing after tea at Trent Bridge and won by five wickets.

In England's two games that mattered, first against India and then in their semi-final against Pakistan, they

displayed grit and determination in the field to claw their way back after the Asian batting had gone off at a rare old pace. From 156 for 3 they pegged India back so well that the Indians won by only one wicket in the last over. Against Pakistan they took the last six wickets for 17 runs, only when batting for 19 runs short of Pakistan's total of 208. In each case the effort came too late. England's young cricketers need to learn to be on the attack from the start, both physically and psychologically.

Pakistan's 222 for 7, after they were put in to bat, revolved around

80 in 109 balls by the opener, Hassan Raza. Initially he played second fiddle to his fellow opener, Taufeeq Umar, a left-hander gifted with delicious timing on both sides of the wicket. India's captain, Retinder Sodhi, broke that stand, and came back at the end with two more wickets. But it was their off-spinner, Ishan Ganda, who prevented Pakistan building a formidable total on a lunchtime base of 120 for 2 from 36 overs.

Hit for 11 off his first four balls after the interval, Ganda bowled Faisal Iqbal as he tried to sweep the fifth. Eight overs later, Raza hit him straight to cover. When he drew the threatening Jammar Khan down the pitch beaten in the air and had him stumped, Pakistan at 178 for 5 were left with a lot to do in the remaining seven overs.

India's problems began much earlier, as they did against South Africa. This time they were 19 for 2, and again Sodhi and the wicket-keeper, Pardeep Chawla, were integral to the recovery. Extras, too, were a great help, providing a quarter of the tea-time total of 101 for 2 after 25 overs.

Once again, though, the break broke the batsmen's concentration. Two overs into the final session Chawla, who had been dropped second ball at first slip, drove Imran Qadir's googly to short extra cover. When Mohammad Kiaf was stumped in the 30th over, the ball spinning back off his bat after he had danced down the pitch to Shoaib Malik's off spin, there was no containing Pakistan's vociferous supporters.

Now, though India required more than four an over, the pressure was on. Suddenly the heroes looked like 15-year-old boys. Sodhi was the exception. Betting or bowling he is a class player, and with an unbeaten 82 to add to his three wickets for 24 runs, the captain carried his side to World Cup glory. Three times Pakistan's supporters came flooding over the boundary, but it was to no avail. In the end the "Zindabads" were silent.

SCORES: Pakistan 222 for 7 (85 overs); Hassan Raza 80; Umar 23 for 6 (52.4 overs); R Sodhi 82nd ball, won by four wickets.

Five youngsters who may have an international future

Jimmy Adams (England)

An accomplished left-handed opening batsman from Sherborne School, he showed with real class against Canada and 68 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pragmatic temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

John Francis (England)

An all-round sportsman from King Edward VI School, Southampton, this bespectacled left-hander demonstrated a refreshing tendency to dominate the attack from the start with his 75 against India. A fine fielder, like Adams he has been developing his cricket with Hampshire's coaches.

Ryan Sierra (South Africa)

Another left-handed batsman to catch the eye, particularly with the 60 in the semi-final against India. But what impressed was his simple-minded ability to play at a product of the Test cricket of excellence. It will come as no surprise he has been selected for South Africa's tour of England.

Imran Qadir (Pakistan)

Follows in the footsteps of his father, Imran Khan, who was a Test cricketer for Pakistan. He has been selected for Pakistan's tour of England. He has a powerful arm and a good understanding of the game.

Pardeep Chawla (India)

A wicket-keeper who has shown great promise in the Under-15 World Cup. He has a good understanding of the game and a strong character. He has been selected for India's tour of England.

If Giddins has a drug problem, he should have been treated as Paul Merson was by the FA, with sympathy and firmness

At The Oval this weekend, the chances are that England will lose to Pakistan. But don't worry: there is still one department of the game in which we lead the world - the ability to run things really badly.

Last week the Test match ended on Monday evening, and by 10.30 next morning six England players were playing in a semi-final for their counties. The man responsible for this curious arrangement, Tim Lamb, is about to be rewarded with the top job in English cricket - chief executive of the Test and County Cricket Board.

Yesterday the board's disciplinary committee met to pass judgement on Ed Giddins, the Sussex player ooted for his fast bowling and fast

living, who had failed a drug test earlier in the season. The committee, chaired by Gerard Elias QC, decided to ban Giddins from professional cricket for the whole of next season. For good measure, he was sacked by his county.

The double whammy would have been harsh but justified if Giddins had been convicted of using performance-enhancing drugs. But the drug in question was cocaine, the positive effects of which would last for about two weeks. One day, no doubt, a laboratory somewhere will come up with a tablet that makes lanky young men better at patrolling the fine-line boundary. But at the moment cricket is drug-proof.

What it is not, alas, is idiot-

proof. I have not met Gerard Elias QC, and have no reason to doubt that he is a fine legal brain and the interests of the game at heart. You just wouldn't know this from his judgements. There have been two of them this season and they have both been ridiculous.

Giddins's drug-taking was evidently social. Yes, he was breaking the law, but only in a small way; the law, had it caught up with him before the TCCB did, would probably have taken a relaxed view and let him off with a warning.

Yes, he was setting a bad example, but in an even smaller way. If Elias thinks that the young people of today take their cues from county cricketers, then he is even more



TIM DE LISLE

out of touch than this judgement makes him look. Young people are influenced by pop stars, film stars, footballers and, above all, each other. Kids who are innocent and old-fashioned enough to be influenced by Sussex seam bowlers are

far too innocent and old-fashioned to know that coke is anything other than a drink, let alone where to get it and what to do with it.

If Giddins has a drug problem, he should have been treated as Paul Merson was by Arsenal, with firmness and sympathy. If he doesn't have a problem, he should have been given a stern warning as to his future conduct.

Which is exactly what Raymond Illingworth should have got when he was hauled up before Elias in June. Illingworth's crime was to have broken the confidentiality of the selection process, by writing a book and some newspaper articles replying to Devo Malcolm's articles criticising his management. Malcolm, who had broken his TCCB

tour contract, was let off with a warning. Illy, who had no contractual obligation to keep his mouth shut, was found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute and fined £2,000.

He has been wandering about like a wounded bear ever since. Every wicket Malcolm takes for Derbyshire adds to the feeling that Illingworth must take most of the blame for their falling-out. But that is one thing, and the subsequent war of words is another. Illingworth, more than anyone in cricket except perhaps Ian Botham, likes to have the last word. By answering Malcolm's broadside, he was only doing what came naturally.

Illingworth leaves the game - for

good, he says - in two weeks' time. Giddins is probably lost to it, though it would be a shame: a man who is described as having disconcerted some of his team-mates with his independent way of life sounds like just what county cricket needs. And both departures could so easily have been avoided.

With out just a new chief executive but a new chairman, too, in the shape of Tesco's Sir Ian MacLaurin, now is the time to take a hard look at the TCCB's disciplinary procedures. "Bringing the game into disrepute" is a phrase so stuffy, nebulous and archaic that it brings the game into disrepute itself.

Tim de Lisle is editor of Wisden Cricket Monthly.

Lawless Essex still looking dangerous

THE WEEK AHEAD

James Whitaker, having led Essex to the 1995 County Championship for 21 years in his last season, is set to leave the club to take over as captain of the Essex team in the 1996 season.

The summer of 1996 will be a busy one for Essex, with the club's first-class season starting in June and the county season beginning in July.

What is also in the air is the prospect of a new stadium for the club, which has been a long-term ambition of the club's management.

It may be argued that the club's financial situation is not ideal, but the management believe that a new stadium is essential for the club's future.

In the case of the club's first-class team, the club's management believe that the club's performance will improve in the 1996 season.

Essex have been successful in the past, winning the County Championship in 1995, and the club's management believe that the club's performance will improve in the 1996 season.

It is also expected that the club's first-class team will perform well in the 1996 season, and the club's management believe that the club's performance will improve in the 1996 season.

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A new lease of life for the far pavilions



Part of the British way of life: the 70-year-old pavilion at Hurstbourne Priors, Hampshire (above), where funding is being sought for an extension; (clockwise from below right) Pateley Bridge Cricket Club, North Yorkshire, is also seeking lottery money to make improvements; the pavilion at Woodgreen CC, in Hampshire, boasts a new extension; and Ripley Castle CC, North Yorkshire, has a new, timbered pavilion

There is glorious compensation for a brief innings at the North Devon Cricket Club: the view of the sea as you walk to the wicket and the sight of the pavilion as you return shortly after. No wonder touring sides head for Instow. The mouth of the River Torridge is a few yards from the boundary line and an occasional recipient of sixes, while the 18th-century pavilion is one of the oldest in the country and, according to the recently retired club secretary Bill Paim, "one of the prettiest".

The Grade II-listed building was originally put up as a barn for animals and then converted to a cricket pavilion in the 1830s. It comes with all facilities, but inside you can still look up from your cream tea to the thatch and beams of the roof above.

Save for an extension on the roof above, there has been little structural alteration over time, which is the same that could be said of the 70-year-old cricket pavilion at Hurstbourne Priors, near Andover, in Hampshire.

An attractive, wooden building with a thatched roof, it has no heating, no lighting, running water or bar. The club's 20 paid-up members and their visitors use it almost exclusively for changing and then move to the village hall for tea.

"We'd like to have an extension to give us basic amenities for the 21st century," says Martyn Page, club chairman. "In this day and age, you should at least be able to get a shower." The cost of providing showers, toilets and a small kitchen area is estimated at £35,000.

Hurstbourne Priors is now preparing an application to the Sports Council's Lottery Sports Fund, which is where Pateley Bridge Cricket Club, in North Yorkshire's Niddale league, will be seeking funds in the future to improve its own facilities.

The core of the club's pavilion is wooden, but a stone and brick extension was added in the 1970s. Members have to decide whether to knock down the whole lot and start again or simply to replace the wooden section. Estimates are more than £80,000 for the former and £45,000 for the latter.

The lottery has proved something of a godsend for local cricket clubs since March 1995. In that time, the Lottery Sports Fund has handed out more than £10.4m to 200 such clubs for pitch improvements, practice facilities and pavilions. A further 181 applications are in the pipeline.

"The lottery has given clubs an opportunity to improve facilities which they have not had for years, and first-class facilities mean people knocking on your door wanting to play for you," says Penny Taylor, grant aid officer for the Hampshire Cricket Association.

National Lottery cash is helping village cricket clubs to do a bit of home improvement

Christian Dymond reports

solidified in the same room. Even the windows were devoid of glass.

But, thanks to a £37,000 wooden-and-thatched extension (£12,980 came from the Sports Council fund and £10,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts), there are now two changing-rooms, hot showers, a disabled toilet, heating, lighting and glazed windows.

"It's a dream come true. We thought we'd have to raise the money ourselves, which would have taken many, many years," says Ray Mortimer, the club's secretary.

Martin Coates, chairman of Bomere Heath Cricket Club, in Shropshire, talks of "money beyond our wildest dreams" to describe the £50,865 and £28,500 that have come to the club from the Sports Council and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts respectively.

A new pavilion (replacing a wooden Nissen hut) and new ground facilities that together have cost £130,000 will be officially opened at the start of the next season.

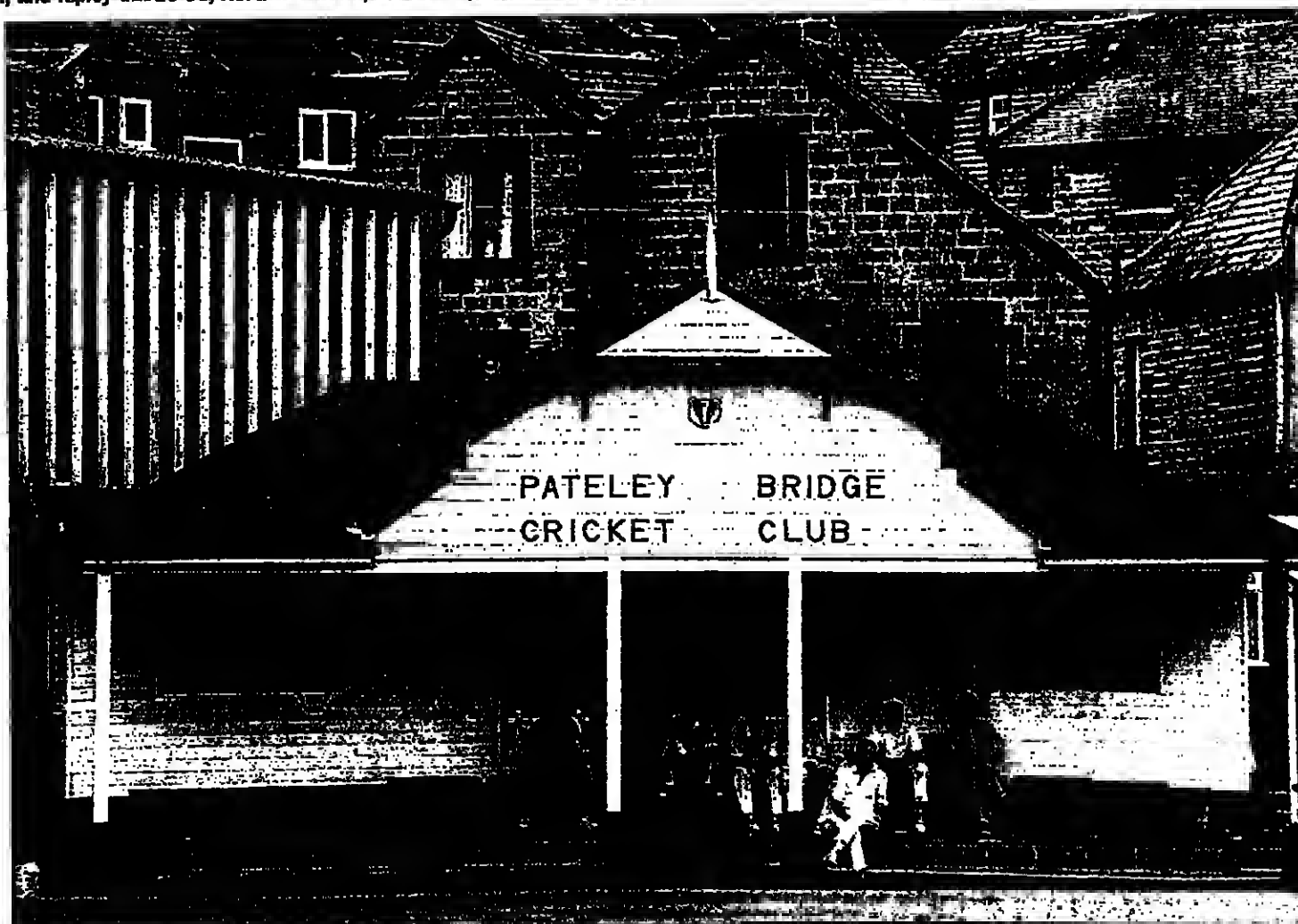
Improved facilities, however, do not necessarily herald an end to the rich variety of clubhouses that are one of the great features of village and small town cricket.

Keswick got a £87,364 sports pavilion in 1994 to replace one that, according to the cricket club captain, Keith Richardson, was "dropping to bits". But the incorporation of the old pavilion's Lakeland green-slate roof, two ventilation turrets and balcony timber gives it a look that belies its age.

Traditional, too, is the three-and-a-half-year-old pavilion at Ripley, near Harrogate. The club wanted something that would blend in with the village and nearby Ripley Castle, so went for a timbered building with a veranda from a Worcestershire company called Courtyard Designs.

"The village cricket pavilion and the ground are part of our British way of life," says Suzanne White of *The Cricketer* magazine, which for the 25th year is organising the national knock-out cup competition for village cricket clubs.

Caldy and Langley cricket clubs will meet in the Alliance and Leicester Gvo Village Cricket Championship final at Lord's on 1 September. Hurstbourne Priors and Pateley Bridge, alas, were knocked out in the first round.



Men treated d firmness

It is all about the men's health and the importance of maintaining a firm and healthy body. The article discusses the benefits of regular exercise and a balanced diet for men, emphasizing the importance of staying active and healthy throughout their lives.

6 coming soon... us open

Next stop: a bite at the Big Apple

Eyes will be keenly trained on Richard Krajicek at Flushing Meadow. John Roberts sizes up the Wimbledon champion

The only time the United States championships went Dutch was in 1968, the first year of open tennis. The American Arthur Ashe defeated Tom Okker for the men's singles title, but the runner-up returned to Amsterdam with the \$14,000 prize money.

Ashe received only \$280 in expenses because he was still an amateur, a second lieutenant in the US Army, "happy to be able to make the payments on my beloved Ford Mustang".

Until six weeks ago, Okker remained the only Dutchman ever to play in a Grand Slam singles final. Then along came Richard Krajicek with a breathtaking triumph at Wimbledon, where he was not even seeded.

The question now is whether the 24-year-old from Rotterdam can go one better than Okker at the US Open, which starts next Monday. Or at least that is one of the questions.

"Who is the more popular Dutchman now in the Netherlands between yourself and the actor Jean Claude Van Damme?" an American reporter wanted to know.

"Oh, he is Belgian, Jean Claude Van Damme," Krajicek pointed out gently.

The reporter apologised and explained that on visiting Amsterdam he had seen a huge billboard portraying the martial arts star. "He is from just south of Holland," Krajicek said helpfully. "I think, compared to actors, there is no comparison, no matter which actors you take. They are much more famous and much more of a celebrity. But I haven't been in Holland, so I have no idea."

Based in Monte Carlo, like so many of his fellow professionals, Krajicek will be able to gauge the impact of his success first hand only when he returns to his birthplace "for a few functions" after finishing his business at the US Open.

After Wimbledon, he put his rackets away for a fortnight and took his customary break in the Austrian village of Ramsau Dachstein, near Salzburg. "In a way, Wimbledon mucked things up for me a little bit, because I had such a short time for the holidays," he teased. "I first went to Austria two years ago, after my knee problems. The doctor advised me to go cross-country skiing twice a year. I also do a lot of running and cycling. Sometimes I am a little bit sick of tennis, and working out in Austria is one of the best holidays I can get."

He elected to miss the Olympic Games in Atlanta. "I thought my schedule was too crowded. Three weeks between Wimbledon and my

next event was the minimum. Maybe if the Olympics had been one week later there would have been a good chance."

The 6ft 5in Krajicek did not exactly go unnoticed back home even before he fulfilled his potential at Wimbledon. "When I play in Holland I think I get a little bit close to what Andre Agassi has every week," he said. "I am pretty popular with the kids in Holland."

While grateful for his talent and the rewards it brings - £392,500 for winning Wimbledon boosted his career prize money to £3.1m - Krajicek does not crave attention. "For one week I can handle it fine, but to have it all the time must be so tiring, and it's tough to be nice to everybody."

Sampras on Krajicek:
'Richard's always had a big game. When he gets hot, he's very difficult. He's always given me problems'

So in that sense I don't really envy Agassi, I guess."

He savoured his accomplishment at Wimbledon during a contemplative moment in a crowded room. "When I was at the champions' dinner on the Sunday evening and the trophy was in front of me and my name was already written on it, the feeling I had was unbelievable. It was great to read the names - Bjorn Borg five times in a row, Pete Sampras three times in a row. They are people of a higher level, but it's like you are part of them, and that's a pretty nice feeling."

Krajicek's straight-sets victory against Sampras in the quarter-finals



ended the world No 1's prospects of becoming the first since Borg to win the title four times consecutively.

Sampras is among the players who have won both Wimbledon and the US Open singles titles in the same season. He succeeded twice, last year and in 1993. Krajicek, however, might also take note that Stefan Edberg, Pat Cash and John Newcombe all experienced the indignity of following a triumph at the All England Club with a first-round disaster in New York.

Krajicek has so far advanced to the fourth round on two of his five visits to the rubberised concrete courts at Flushing Meadow, New York. In 1992, he led Edberg, the eventual champion, by two sets to one and was a break up in the fifth set, the Swede recovering to win 6-4.

A year later, at the same stage, Krajicek was defeated in four sets by the Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev.

Last year, the Dutchman reached the third round, where he lost to the Australian Michael Tjebk in a fifth-set tie-break.

"The weather can be so tough at the US Open," Krajicek said, recalling lengthy matches in heat and humidity. "At Wimbledon, the grass is a tough surface to play on. At the US Open, the big difficulty is that you have to be in good shape. You can lose to the weather, basically."

He is determined to build on the Wimbledon experience. "I should enjoy the feeling of being Wimbledon champion. I don't see it as a burden."

Sampras reserves judgement. "We'll see over the year and the years how he responds to being a Wimbledon champion," he said. "Everybody is going to be kind of shooting after him."

"Richard has always had a very big game, a very big serve. When he gets hot, he's very difficult. When he's not playing well and he's not healthy, then he's a little bit more vulnerable. I've played him a number of times and he's always given me problems."

Sampras needs to make a successful defence of the championship if he is to avoid finishing a year without a Grand Slam title to his name for the first time since 1992.

"It's been a strange year," he mused, "especially in the majors. There have been a lot of upsets and it seems like a lot of guys have stepped up, Kafelnikov winning in Paris and Krajicek winning at Wimbledon."

The surprises could continue, although Krajicek fancies that Sampras and Agassi will be difficult to shift on home territory. It might be expecting too much for the Dutchman to snatch the record \$600,000 prize from under American noses, even in New Amsterdam.



The Dutchman has it: Richard Krajicek after winning the men's final in the All England Championships at Wimbledon this year, and (left) with his girlfriend, Daphne Deckers, at the Wimbledon ball

Photographs: Arnold Slater; Allsport

Kiss goodbye to heady days in the Louis Armstrong

A new stadium is set to provide a dazzling showcase for the US Open

Organisers of the US Open in New York trust that a new main stadium costing \$23.4m will finally persuade the tournament's critics that a bright golden haze on Flushing Meadow does not necessarily relate to garbage.

Structural work is complete, and the 21,700-seat stadium is on schedule to become the showpiece of next year's championships. It stands about 50 yards from the current Stadium Court, which, unlike Wimbledon's original Court No 1, has not been condemned to be reduced to rubble. Few hurrahs are expected on that score.

Although renowned for dramatic matches, the US Open is widely regarded as the ugly sister of the four Grand Slam championships because of its poor amenities.

Flushing Meadow-Corona Park formerly was a dump for the burning of Brooklyn's rubbish - F Scott Fitzgerald called it "a valley of ashes" in *The Great Gatsby* - and reminders of its past come in whiffs from

the US Open, especially on steamier days.

Big advances at the world's other leading venues have accentuated the US Open's image problem.

The Australian Open has blossomed since moving from the Melbourne suburbs to a magnificent National Tennis Centre in the city in 1988. The French Tennis Federation rebuilt the main stand of the Centre Court at Stade Roland Garros in Paris and created a splendid new Court No 1, dedicated to Suzanne Lenglen.

And Wimbledon's 11,000-seat new Court No 1 will be the focal point of next year's championships as the All England Club marks the completion of stage one of a long-term development programme.

The US Open is making an effort to catch up, but the present main stadium, with its dodgy plumbing and unreliable elevators, will provide centre stage for a 19th and final year during the course of the coming fortnight.

Although the arena will continue to be used, it will be renovated and downsized from



The steep-sided Louis Armstrong Stadium makes for spectacular television coverage Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Allsport

20,000 seats to 10,000 after the 1997 championships. The adjacent Grandstand Court, which seats 5,500, will remain intact.

As part of the United States Tennis Association's lease with the City of New York, 24.9 acres have been added to the original 21.6 acres of the site. When

the expansion programme is completed, the total number of courts will have increased by 10 to 47, nine of which are indoors.

The biggest selling point of the project is the fact that the new stadium has been designed specifically for tennis. That could not be said of its predecessor, a

steeply banked human ant-hill of an arena built for exhibitions and concerts long before the likes of Connors and McEnroe made themselves heard.

Louis Armstrong Stadium was converted in 1978 when the National Tennis Center at Flushing Meadow materialised in the

public park in the borough of Queens, close to Shea Stadium, home of the Mets, and within earshot of La Guardia airport.

The late WE "Slew" Hester, an oilman from Jackson, Mississippi, was president of the USTA at the time it was decided that the championships

had outgrown the West Side Tennis Club at Forest Hills, New York. In January 1977, Hester was on a flight approaching La Guardia when he glimpsed the derelict Louis Armstrong Stadium in a snow-covered Flushing Meadow.

The stadium, built by the Singer Sewing Machine Company for the 1964-65 New York World's Fair and originally called the Singer Bowl, became the property of the city when the fair closed and was later renamed Louis Armstrong Stadium for the great man of jazz, who lived in the district.

By 1974, the structure was in disrepair and the city, lacking the funds to renovate it, decided to close the stadium. Then in flew "Slew" with the USTA's offer to underwrite the cost of transforming the site into a National Tennis Center which could be used by the public for 10 months of the year.

The name Louis Armstrong Stadium was retained, and will continue down the scale. The task of renovating the structure and halving the capacity is expected to be completed in time for the 1998 championships.

"The facility has served us very well, but it is outdated," Lester Snyder, chairman of the US Open Committee, says. "We don't want to continue having some of the maintenance problems that we currently have. If we reduce the upperweight that will help us tremendously, as it affects the lower part of the stadium."

"I was looking for somebody and I got a bit of a nose bleed up there," joked David Markin, vice-chairman of the US Open project, emphasising that the new stadium will have a much more gentle slope, so that even the top seats will have a much better view.

It has to be admitted that the steepness of Louis Armstrong Stadium lends itself to some spectacular television coverage, especially when a capacity crowd generates a characteristically raucous atmosphere.

On such occasions the spectators have a wonderful time, even those on the rim of the bowl - they may not have the best view of the shots, but they almost certainly noticed that Agassi was thin on top when he still sported the big hair.

John Roberts

coming soon... boxing 7

Salford's Viking king ready for a rampage

When Steve Foster steps into the ring, a horde of followers push the longboats out. Glyn Leach reports

Eyelids did not bat when Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis, Americans of Jewish descent, played The Vikings in the leprothy action movie that has become a Bank Holiday/Sunday afternoon staple - hardly Jeremy Irons being asked to play a Pakistani, was it? But it is doubtful that the Dimple and the DA knew what they were starting with their cult of the counterfeited Norsemen.

Longboats in Nineties Greater Manchester? Horned hordes roaming through Salford? At the beck and call of a pseudo-Scandinavian warlord with not a dram of Nordic blood in him?

Nobody could have predicted the advent of Steve "The Viking" Foster, the Commonwealth and IBF Intercontinental light-middle-weight champion and a man approaching The Rev Jim Jones's standards of power over the flock, but Foster's congregation is more capable of spending its disposable income.

Foster, in training at Salford's Phoenix Camp gym for what until recently seemed a most unlikely world title challenge next month, has long been British boxing's premier hands-on ticket-seller.

No beneficiary of multimedia marketing, but a man with huge grassroots popularity in his own locale, who knows the people buying tickets to his fights because he has sold them those tickets himself. Foster shifted a best-of £40,000 worth for his last contest, when he out-pointed Chris Pyatt for the Commonwealth title, all taken from friends, family and in the pubs and clubs of Salford. Hardly surprising, then, that Foster should recently have made his first foray into legitimate boxing promotion. The show sold out, with a thousand prospective

punters having to be turned away. He stages his second promotion to-morrow night in Salford.

Foster, 35, candidly admits that esoteric boxing skills are not the root of his status. "We all know I'm not Sugar Ray Leonard," he said. "I trade on me fitness. I'm always in great shape. I'm a believer that most of the skill goes out of a fight after five or six rounds. After that, it's down to who wants it most."

Modestly, Foster attributes his popularity to Salford having been starved of boxing success. True, but a theory making light of Foster's charisma and reputation locally as an all-round decent guy. And until the end of last year, Foster was anything but successful, having lost three mid-level title challenges. Yet his following was no smaller than now.

Central to the success that causes his promoter, Frank Warren, to term

Foster "a phenomenon" has been the Viking theme introduced five years ago when someone suggested a catchy French *nom de guerre* might perk up a flagging career. As a teenager, Foster's long blond hair, cropped today, and love of a brawl - "I were a bit of a handful" - earned him his Norse nickname from drinking friends: "You're like a bloody Viking, you." Two and two made four.

But a teenager's drinking name would become Foster's meal ticket in his mid-thirties as a father of three (a 19-year-old daughter and sons aged 15 and 8), a former bricklayer and Salford publican who readily admits: "It's no secret, I still like a drink, me."

It is surreal in the extreme to witness the thousands of horned helmets and borrowed fireside-rug cloaks in the crowd when Foster fights. Roaring out an approximation of the theme tune to the Douglas-Curtis



Steve Foster in the gym. Me trainer, Billy Graham, is getting me fitter than ever for this. It's been weeks since I've had a drink with me Vikings' Photograph: Andrew Varley

movie, the chant appropriated by supporters at the City Ground and Ewood Park when Lars Bohinen has had "on" days.

Such is the devotion to Foster that a band of Viking raiders - "I know 'em all, went to school with 'em, drink with 'em" - travelled, in full regalia, on a flatbed truck dressed as a longboat to a Foster fight in Birmingham. When Foster lost (as he has done 13

times in 34 fights), they returned to Manchester, torched their wheeled ship and sent it sailing down the River Irwell as a Viking funeral for their vanquished chieftain. Criminally imaginative. Thankfully, the Foster family dog escape a fiery fate.

But the mischief had turned to mayhem earlier that evening in September 1994 when Vikings from Salford, a Manchester, United

stronghold, and the notorious "Zulu" Birmingham City supporters who followed Foster's opponent, Robert McCracken, clashed inside the National Exhibition Centre in one of the worst British boxing riots ever - though it was chicken feed compared with July's Madison Square Garden disturbance. "It were terrible," Foster said. "Those Zulus attacked us. We're never any

trouble. Me Vikings used to take their wives and kids along, but they stopped after that. It took four fights before the Vikings felt safe in bringing the family again."

They will be there in force at the Nynex Centre, Manchester, on 19 September. Only Odin knows what Florida's Ronald "Winky" Wright, the World Boxing Organisation champion, will make of it all.

"And wait till he gets a load of me, Foster said. "I'll be in his face all night. Me trainer, Billy Graham, is getting me fitter than ever for this. It's been weeks since I've had a drink with me Vikings."

Unsurprisingly, Graham is nicknamed "The Preacher". But no, he does not inspire dog-collar wearing support. One cult will do Salford nicely.

1 THE INDEPENDENT

PLAY FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM

WIN a drive in a grand prix car

Formula 1 Dream Team is just like Fantasy Football: you pick and manage your dream grand prix team to score points over the season.

Even though the grand prix season is underway, it is not too late to join in: pit your wits against other enthusiasts and you could win our prize for the Belgian Grand Prix. The champion of the 1996 grand prix season will win our overall prize, a drive in a Formula One car.

Your team must comprise three drivers, a chassis and an engine; your budget is £40 million. Make your selections from the grand prix shopping list (printed right); the only restriction is that your third driver must come from the £1 million category.

Details of how to enter are given on this page. Remember, there are prizes for the winning Dream Team in each individual grand prix so you can enter a different team for each race.

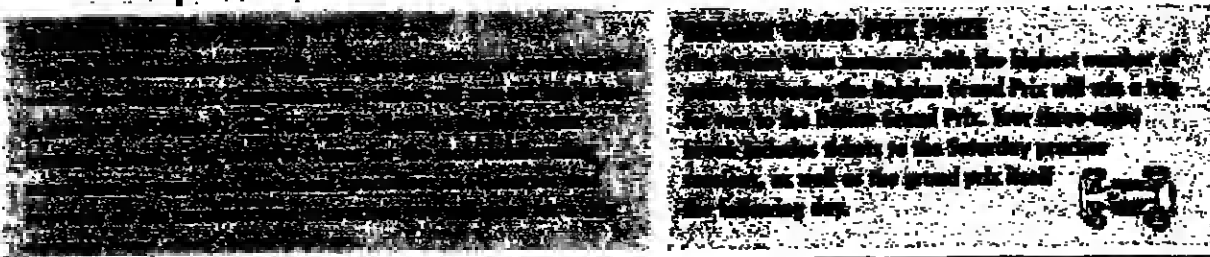
HOW YOU SCORE

Points are awarded per race to the top six finishers, based on the Formula One World Championship points scoring system (10, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1) but with an extra 10 points awarded to each of the top six finishers. All drivers are eligible to score for a top six finish but can also notch up extra points as follows:

- The fastest driver in race-day warm-up will collect six points, with five for the second and so on down to one point for the sixth quickest.
- Drivers score one point for each place they make up over their grid position. Points are not deducted by losing places.
- Five points are lost if your driver posts first retirement, four for second down to one point lost for the fifth retirement.
- If your driver makes the quickest pit-stop (from the entry of the pitlane to the exit) you gain five points.
- If your driver sets the fastest lap time in the race, you gain five points.
- If your driver receives a stop/go penalty, you lose five points.
- If your driver starts on pole position, you gain five points.
- The Independent will name a Driver of the Day after each race for a particularly impressive performance, worth five points.
- Non-qualification for a grand prix loses you two points. If a driver is on the published starting grid but fails to



Plus prizes to be won with every grand prix



take the start, no points are lost.

- Drivers removed from the results for any reason lose all points gained that weekend. Any driver not competing in a grand prix weekend scores no points.
- Chassis score and lose points in the same way as drivers for a top six finish or any early retirement. The score is based on the first chassis home of that particular manufacturer. Likewise, only the first chassis retirement will count if they are both among the first five to retire.
- Engine rules are the same as the chassis rules, without the retirement penalties.

HOW TO ENTER
Choose your Dream Team from the shopping list on this page. Remember, you must choose three drivers (the third from the £1 million section), one chassis and one engine. You must not exceed your budget of £40 million.

Give your team a name and register it by ringing 0891 891 805.

You will immediately be asked the entry question: How many races are there in this year's Formula One World Championship?

To enter your Dream Team details you can use one of two methods.

Method 1 uses a tone phone that lets you

key in the code numbers of your driver, chassis and engine choices. The computer will check that your team falls within budget and is eligible.

Method 2 uses a non-tone phone and you give your details verbally. A budget check is not possible using this method.

When you have registered your Dream Team, you will be asked to predict the number of points this year's champion will notch up over the year. In case of a tie at the end of the season, the nearest figure to the champion's points will win the top prize. In the event of a further tie, the team that registered first will win.

Once you have registered your team you

will be asked for your name, address and telephone number. Your team selections plus your personal details will be played back to you and, when you confirm that they are correct, you will be given a PIN number.

This is confirmation of your entry and will enable you to access the score checking line.

There is no limit on the number of teams an individual can enter, but only one team can be registered per call.

CHECKING YOUR SCORE

You can check your team's position at any time by calling 0891 891 806 and quoting your PIN number. If you want to know the individual driver, chassis and engine scores from the most recent race, call 0891 891 807. This line will also list the Top 50 Formula One Dream Teams.

Rules

1. All telephone calls are charged at 30p per minute (cheap rate, 40p per minute at all other times, with a typical call to secure your entry lasting between five and seven minutes).
2. The deadline to be included in a particular race is midday the Friday prior to that race.
3. The judge's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into and there is no cash alternative for prizes.
4. Employees of Newspaper Publishing Plc, Haymarket Publishing Ltd and all associated companies and their families are ineligible.
5. Entrants must be 18 or over and residents of the UK or the Irish Republic.
6. To be eligible for the main prize, you must hold a current driving licence, be no more than 1.95m tall and weigh no more than 220lbs.
7. All scores will be worked out according to the official FIA time sheets produced at the meeting. The values stated for drivers, engines and chassis bear no relation to real life.
8. In the event of a tie for the Dream Team Top Prize or for any of the individual race prizes, the team that registered first will win.
9. For lost PIN numbers please call: 0891 891 808. For our Helpline call: 01275 344183.
10. The Top 50 Teams Line, lists the top 50 teams from the last race. Both the Team Position Check Line and the Results & Top 50 Teams Line will be updated at 2pm on the Monday following a race.

Shopping List

DRIVERS	CHASSIS
£25m	£20m
1 M Schumacher	40 Benetton
£23m	41 Williams
2 J Alesi	£18m
3 D Hill	42 Ferrari
£20m	£15m
4 G Berger	43 McLaren
£18m	£14m
5 D Coulthard	44 Sauber
6 E Irvine	45 Jordan
7 J Villeneuve	£12m
8 M Hakkinen	46 Ligier
9 H H Frenzen	£10m
£10m	47 Tyrrell
10 M Brundle	£8m
11 R Barrichello	48 Arrows
12 J Herbert	£6m
13 M Salo	49 Minardi
14 P Lamy	£4m
£4m	50 Forti
15 P Diniz	£2m
16 U Katayama	51 Renault
17 J Verstappen	£1m
18 O Paris	52 Ferrari
£3m	£1m
19 N Badoer	53 Mercedes
20 R Rosset	£12m
21 K Montemrini	54 Peugeot
£2m	£10m
22 G Fisichella*	55 Mugen
23 V Sospiri*	£8m
24 F Marquies*	56 Ford V10
25 F Lagorce*	£6m
26 H Nodet*	57 Yamaha
27 T Inoue*	£4m
28 M Blundell*	58 Hart
29 J-C Boullion*	£3m
30 K Brack*	59 Ford Zetec V8
31 K Burt*	£2m
32 E Collard*	60 Ford ED V8
33 N Fontana*	
34 D Franchitti*	
35 N Larini*	
36 J Magnussen*	
37 A Pross*	
38 G Tarquini*	
39 K Wendlinger*	

*Not competing in Belgian GP but may compete later

DREAM TEAM 1996 0891 891 805

Missing steaks, beer/whisky and wo/men

Report 1300 Tuesday

Last night was long and very tiring - at sunset we continued to battle it out with France 11 (Dominic Bourgeois), having spent all afternoon crossing within metres of each other. The night was pretty miserable for everyone in the rain... a measure of something, I guess. We made a big error by going too far north and ended up easing sheets to clear Dodman Point. The French followed us, and we both lost our "comfort zone" lead and as the sky cleared in the early hours we could see several boats in the fleet and the race restarted. That's yachting, I guess!

We have been going to windward ever since, which is demotivating for us, as we can't get within 10 degrees of the heading of the other boats. Going through the straits between Land's End and the Isles of Scilly was a little tense, as we were losing ground rapidly, with the tide turning against us. A lift at the last minute saved us, and we have since climbed away from the Scots (we think) to hold on to the second place, with the French not too far ahead. Now we are all sailing away from land (at last) towards the Fastnet. Our biggest problem is our inability to point and we are already a mile to leeward of the French. Conrad Humphreys (first mate) and I have tried everything to solve this, and have considered turning the genoa around as I am sure it would look better.

Mark Turner, skipper of England 1, reports on the criss-cross chase of the Round Britain Challenge '96

Aboard, the crew have been taking all this very well, despite the rain boredom. Conversation standards have dropped to low levels, none of which can be repeated, but the girls are firmly in charge it seems. Morale is excellent, and we are all meditating to get a wind direction change. No one person has complained yet about anything, which surprises me - we have been moving crew weight around continuously, no peace at all. Sandwiches for lunch, to the delight of the crew these will be served in the sunshine on deck (crouched to leeward), with some dolphins in close company. The French are also having lunch, as we are following their trail of rubbish... We have a problem with the water which is causing a bit of a headache and we're having to boil any water used. Not sure what is happening but it is not very clean.

One of the amusing parts of the Teacher's Challenge is the inter-team communication - each team has developed its own methods of trying to get a VHF link without others knowing or understanding. None of us can understand the Irish, although we've tracked down their channel and the French obviously don't realise that we can understand them - very amusing listening to their chatter. A hundred and fifty slow miles to go to the Fastnet. We are hoping desperately for a change of wind so we can stop using our genoa. We know we can go faster on other points of sail. The crew are talking of "all" the things they are missing and I have already heard steaks, beer/whisky and women. Just like all other offshore races, then.

We have observed a new phenomenon on board: FOF - Fear of Failure - experienced by all Teacher's Challenge crew as all are so concerned not to let their team-mates down. For Conrad and me, the last 24 hours have been pretty sleepless. With the competition between the five nations so close there has been a lot of adrenalin running and we have been having to support and teach the crew at the same time, which adds a new dimension to the sailing. The crew on board Pride of the Isle of Wight are a mixed lot from very different backgrounds. City finance managers are prone to certain injuries - soft hands and light spanner sheets are causing blister problems for Peter Tarmot.

We are in the middle of a chess game with the situation changing every 10 minutes.

England 1, on course for the Fastnet



England 1, on course for the Fastnet

Larder looks to Roper and Hunte

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

The Great Britain coach, Phil Larder, is resigned to losing three of his leading players from the southern hemisphere tour that starts next month and will start the process of lining up replacements tomorrow.

The Wigan pair of Jason Robinson and Gary Connolly, plus Lee Jackson, who is now with the Newcastle Knights in Australia, are all under contract to the Australian Rugby League, which says it will not allow them to play.

"We are realistic about the prospect of losing them," Larder said. "It was always a possibility after the ARL persuaded Gary to withdraw from the Fiji Nations. They have had large sums of money from the ARL and do not want to run the risk of losing them."

Although the League has made defiant noises about the ARL's tactics, the players themselves are already making their own arrangements, with Connolly and Robinson negotiating close-season contracts with rugby union clubs.

The Great Britain management will discuss the situation tomorrow, but Larder will not make any decision on replacements until after the last Super League match of the season, between St Helens and Warrington next Monday.

That will give two members of his shadow squad the chance to impress, as Saints' Alan Hunte and Warrington's Jonathan Roper are both expected to play.

Another candidate as a stand-in for Robinson is Jason Crichtley, from Larder's Keighley club, who scored six tries against Widnes on Sunday to underline his claims.

James Lowe of the Bradford Bulls is the favourite to take over from Jackson as one of the party's two specialist hookers.

The Conrad Leisure group, which narrowly failed to take over Leeds United recently, has switched its attention to the city's rugby league club. The Leeds chairman, Denis Greenwood, said that talks had already taken place and that the club would welcome investment after a disastrous first season in Super League.

The chief executive of the Rugby League, Maurice Lindsay, has said union clubs are making a mistake by offering short-term contracts to league players.

"I am not keen to see our players go but if rugby union are silly enough to offer short-term contracts of £100,000 for a handful of games to our star players it would be a pity to be unfair to me to prevent them earning such relatively easy money."

"I do not think it will happen again next season. I cannot say that we are afraid of losing top stars to rugby union full-time as almost all of our best players are contracted until the end of the century."

"These contracts were sealed when the Australian Rugby League were over to 1995 trying to sign our players. In this respect, the ARL may have done us a favour."

Salford are complaining that, although the winners of the Staines Super League this weekend will receive £60,000, there is no prize for the First Division title, which Salford won last weekend.

RESULTS

YORK

2.05: 1. RYHOQUE (W) 5-2; 2. Symonds 1st 20-1; 3. In Conquest 6-11; 4. 1st 20-1; 5. 2nd 20-1; 6. 3rd 20-1; 7. 4th 20-1; 8. 5th 20-1; 9. 6th 20-1; 10. 7th 20-1; 11. 8th 20-1; 12. 9th 20-1; 13. 10th 20-1; 14. 11th 20-1; 15. 12th 20-1; 16. 13th 20-1; 17. 14th 20-1; 18. 15th 20-1; 19. 16th 20-1; 20. 17th 20-1; 21. 18th 20-1; 22. 19th 20-1; 23. 20th 20-1; 24. 21st 20-1; 25. 22nd 20-1; 26. 23rd 20-1; 27. 24th 20-1; 28. 25th 20-1; 29. 26th 20-1; 30. 27th 20-1; 31. 28th 20-1; 32. 29th 20-1; 33. 30th 20-1; 34. 31st 20-1; 35. 32nd 20-1; 36. 33rd 20-1; 37. 34th 20-1; 38. 35th 20-1; 39. 36th 20-1; 40. 37th 20-1; 41. 38th 20-1; 42. 39th 20-1; 43. 40th 20-1; 44. 41st 20-1; 45. 42nd 20-1; 46. 43rd 20-1; 47. 44th 20-1; 48. 45th 20-1; 49. 46th 20-1; 50. 47th 20-1; 51. 48th 20-1; 52. 49th 20-1; 53. 50th 20-1; 54. 51st 20-1; 55. 52nd 20-1; 56. 53rd 20-1; 57. 54th 20-1; 58. 55th 20-1; 59. 56th 20-1; 60. 57th 20-1; 61. 58th 20-1; 62. 59th 20-1; 63. 60th 20-1; 64. 61st 20-1; 65. 62nd 20-1; 66. 63rd 20-1; 67. 64th 20-1; 68. 65th 20-1; 69. 66th 20-1; 70. 67th 20-1; 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Play INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL



You've seen the rest now play the best in The Independent and the Independent on Sunday. Independent Fantasy Football, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs, brings you the first real innovation in fantasy football allowing you to pick the playing formation of your team. You can opt for a defensive strategy with five defenders, three midfielders and two strikers in a 5-3-2 formation, or go on the attack with three strikers in a 4-3-3 line-up. Complete your team with a goalkeeper and a Premiership manager and you'll be ready for kick-off. To put your title-winning team together you have a budget of £40 million to spend. It is up to you how you spend the money, with no restrictions on the number of players you can choose from any one Premiership team. Look carefully and you will find some real bargains, with Alan Shearer on sale for the fantasy price of £11.1 million!

So take up the challenge and prove your skill as a manager to win a football fan's dream prize and the opportunity to gloat over friends and colleagues well into the 1997-98 season.

PRIZES

The overall winner at the end of the season will be the entrant who has accrued more points than any other Independent Fantasy Football team in that time. Win the ultimate prize - a trip to the 1998 World Cup in France. The winner, plus runner-up, will see all the action of a quarter-final and a semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's World Cup qualifying games at Wembley.

HOW TO ENTER

Using your football knowledge decide your team formation from the following four options:

- FORMATION A. 4-4-2**
4 Defenders, 4 Midfielders, 2 Strikers
FORMATION B. 4-3-3
4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers
FORMATION C. 5-3-2
5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers
FORMATION D. 3-5-2
3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

You are free to enter as many teams as you wish, allowing you to try out more than one tactical formation, but each team must be made as a separate entry via a separate telephone call.

Once you have chosen your formation, select your team of 10 players to fit your chosen option, plus one goalkeeper and



one manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under and the team's total value must not exceed £40 million. Remember to give your team a name.

Use our Team Selection form above right, to make a note of your team's details, then dial our registration hotline to register. Where possible, please try to use a tone telephone, although a traditional pulse telephone can be used if necessary. Make sure you follow the instructions on the phone line carefully. At the end of your call you will be given your own special PIN number, which you must keep safe. It can be added to your Team Selection form.

HOW TO SCORE

Every time one of your players scores a goal you will be awarded four points. Four points will also be awarded for goalkeepers and defenders whose team have kept a clean sheet during a match. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one-goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded one bonus point in addition to the standard four points awarded for that goal. Each successful assist (a

pass that, in the opinion of our team of experts, leads directly to a goal) will give a player three points. The opinion of our experts on this matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

Players lose one point for a yellow card and three for a red card. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count for scoring purposes.

The Premiership manager that you choose will be awarded three points if their real-life team win, one point if they draw and no points if they lose.

Results will be published in The Independent every Wednesday for all games played from the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent on Sunday.

If your player or manager has been injured or transferred out of the Premiership, there will be the chance to update your team in our transfer period, which will be announced soon. Please read the Rules and Conditions carefully before making your call.

Team Selection Form

Name	Code	Value
Goalkeeper		
Defender 1		
Defender 2		
Defender 3		
Defender 4		
Defender 5		
Midfielder 1		
Midfielder 2		
Midfielder 3		
Midfielder 4		
Midfielder 5		
Striker 1		
Striker 2		
Striker 3		
Manager		

PIN No. Total £ Team Name:

POINT SCORES:

4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win, 1 point for a draw ■ Lose 1 point for a yellow card ■ Lose 3 points for a red card

Register today, call:

UK 0891-252-244 (tone)

UK 0891-252-234 (pulse)

Republic of Ireland: 1550 131 553

UK calls cost 39p per minute cheap rate and 49p at all other times.
Republic of Ireland calls cost 59p per minute including VAT at all times.
Maximum call length 6.5 minutes.

INDEPENDENT TEAM MARKET

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)
GOALKEEPERS															
300	Seaman	ARS	5.9	457	Watson	EVE	2.7	553	Reeves	WIM	1.8	687	Woon	NOT	3.4
303	Bosnich	AV	4.0	458	Umsworth	EVE	3.0	554	Thorpe	WIM	1.8	688	Bart-Williams	NOT	3.6
304	Flowers	BLA	5.2	459	Hodgson	EVE	2.2	555	Thatcher	WIM	2.7	689	Stone	NOT	3.0
305	Kharine	CHE	3.7	460	Hinchcliffe	EVE	1.9					690	Gemmell	NOT	3.0
306	Hitchcock	CHE	1.5	463	Jobson	LEE	2.7	MIDFIELDERS							
307	Ogrizovic	COV	2.2	464	Kelly	LEE	3.6	600	Merson	ARS	4.4	691	Parker	LEE	2.5
308	Filan	COV	1.5	465	Wetherall	LEE	3.5	603	Platt	ARS	4.8	694	Taylor	LEE	1.6
309	Southall	EVE	3.0	466	Dorogi	LEE	3.2	604	Parfou	ARS	2.4	695	Izzett	LEE	2.1
330	Martyn	LEE	3.3	467	Pemberton	LEE	1.2	605	Heider	ARS	3.7	696	Waddie	SW	2.7
333	James	LIV	4.7	468	Walsh	LEE	2.2	606	Hillier	ARS	1.5	697	Blunker	SW	2.2
335	Poole	LEE	1.5	469	Grayson	LEE	2.2	607	Taylor	AV	1.9	698	Jones	SW	2.8
336	Hoult	DER	1.6	470	Whitlow	LEE	1.2	608	Downs	AV	3.1	699	Hyde	SW	1.8
337	Schmeichel	MU	5.5	473	Watts	LEE	1.6	609	Draper	AV	4.1	700	Magilton	SOT	2.4
338	Walsh	MID	3.0	474	Babb	LIV	3.7	630	Granger	AV	4.1	703	Venison	SOT	2.7
339	Srnicek	NEW	3.7	475	Jones	LIV	2.7	633	Wilcox	AV	4.1	704	Heaney	SOT	2.2
340	Hislop	NEW	3.7	476	Wright	LIV	2.8	634	Kemp	AV	4.1	705	Gray	SUN	3.0
343	Crossley	NOT	2.7	477	Ruddock	LIV	3.0	635	Wicks	AV	4.1	706	Kay	SUN	3.0
344	Wright	NOT	1.3	478	Scales	LIV	4.4	636	Stewart	AV	4.1	707	Gray	SUN	3.0
345	Beasant	SOT	1.8	479	Harkness	LIV	2.2	637	Chaff	AV	4.1	708	Anderson	SUN	3.0
346	Prestman	SW	2.7	480	Neville (G)	MU	3.7	638	Phillips	AV	4.1	709	Stewart	SUN	3.0
347	Coton	SUN	1.8	483	Neville (P)	MU	3.7	639	Wise	CHE	3.7	710	Stewart	SUN	3.0
348	Walker	TOT	3.4	484	Irwin	MU	4.1	640	Newton	CHE	2.4	711	Hughes	WH	2.7
349	Milkosko	WH	3.0	485	Pallister	MU	4.3	641	Peacock	CHE	2.1	712	Moncur	WH	2.7
350	Sullivan	WIM	1.8	486	May	MU	3.0	642	Salako	COV	2.4	713	Bishop	WH	2.7
				487	Vickers	MU	2.2	643	Salako	COV	2.4	714	Jones	WH	2.8
				488	Pearson	MID	2.2	644	Salako	COV	2.4	715	Baig	WH	3.1
				489	Whyte	MID	2.2	645	Salako	COV	2.4	716	Arley	WH	3.1
				490	Cox	MID	2.5	646	Salako	COV	2.2	717	Arley	WH	3.1
				491	Albert	NEW	3.7	647	Salako	COV	2.2	718	Arley	WH	3.1
				492	Hodgson	NEW	3.7	648	Salako	COV	2.2	719	Arley	WH	3.1
				493	Pearson	NEW	3.7	649	Salako	COV	2.2	720	Arley	WH	3.1
				494	Barton	NEW	3.7	650	Salako	COV	2.2	721	Arley	WH	3.1
				495	Barton	NEW	3.7	651	Salako	COV	2.2	722	Arley	WH	3.1
				496	Barton	NEW	3.7	652	Salako	COV	2.2	723	Arley	WH	3.1
				497	Barton	NEW	3.7	653	Salako	COV	2.2	724	Arley	WH	3.1
				498	Barton	NEW	3.7	654	Salako	COV	2.2	725	Arley	WH	3.1
				499	Barton	NEW	3.7	655	Salako	COV	2.2	726	Arley	WH	3.1
				500	Barton	NEW	3.7	656	Salako	COV	2.2	727	Arley	WH	3.1
				501	Barton	NEW	3.7	657	Salako	COV	2.2	728	Arley	WH	3.1
				502	Barton	NEW	3.7	658	Salako	COV	2.2	729	Arley	WH	3.1
				503	Barton	NEW	3.7	659	Salako	COV	2.2	730	Arley	WH	3.1
				504	Barton	NEW	3.7	660	Salako	COV	2.2	731	Arley	WH	3.1
				505	Barton	NEW	3.7	661	Salako	COV	2.2	732	Arley	WH	3.1
				506	Barton	NEW	3.7	662	Salako	COV	2.2	733	Arley	WH	3.1
				507	Barton	NEW	3.7	663	Salako	COV	2.2	734	Arley	WH	3.1
				508	Barton	NEW	3.7	664	Salako	COV	2.2	735	Arley	WH	3.1
				509	Barton	NEW	3.7	665	Salako	COV	2.2	736	Arley	WH	3.1
				510	Barton	NEW	3.7	666	Salako	COV	2.2	737	Arley	WH	3.1
				511	Barton	NEW	3.7	667	Salako	COV	2.2	738	Arley	WH	3.1
				512	Barton	NEW	3.7	668	Salako	COV	2.2	739	Arley	WH	3.1
				513	Barton	NEW	3.7	669	Salako	COV	2.2	740	Arley	WH	3.1
				514	Barton	NEW	3.7	670	Salako	COV	2.2	741	Arley	WH	3.1
				515	Barton	NEW	3.7	671	Salako	COV	2.2	742	Arley	WH	3.1
				516	Barton	NEW	3.7	672	Salako	COV	2.2	743	Arley	WH	3.1
				517	Barton	NEW	3.7	673	Salako	COV	2.2	744	Arley	WH	3.1
				518	Barton	NEW	3.7	674	Salako	COV	2.2	745	Arley	WH	3.1
				519	Barton	NEW	3.7	675	Salako	COV	2.2	746	Arley	WH	3.1
				520	Barton	NEW	3.7	676	Salako	COV	2.2	747	Arley	WH	3.1
				521	Barton	NEW	3.7	677	Salako	COV	2.2	748	Arley	WH	3.1
				522	Barton	NEW	3.7	678	Salako	COV	2.2	749	Arley	WH	3.1
				523	Barton	NEW	3.7	679	Salako	COV	2.2	750	Arley	WH	3.1
				524	Barton	NEW	3.7	680	Salako	COV	2.2	751	Arley	WH	3.1
				525	Barton	NEW	3.7	681	Salako	COV	2.2	752	Arley	WH	3.1
				526	Barton	NEW	3.7	682	Salako	COV	2.2	753	Arley	WH	3.1
				527	Barton	NEW	3.7	683	Salako	COV	2.2	754	Arley	WH	3.1
				528	Barton	NEW	3.7	684	Salako	COV	2.2	755	Arley	WH	3.1
				529	Barton	NEW	3.7	685	Salako	COV	2.2	756	Arley	WH	3.1
				530	Barton	NEW	3.7	686	Salako	COV	2.2	757	Arley	WH	3.1
				531	Barton	NEW	3.7	687	Salako	COV	2.2	758	Arley	WH	3.1
				532	Barton	NEW	3.7	688	Salako	COV	2.2	759	Arley	WH	3.1
				533	Barton	NEW	3.7	689	Salako	COV	2.2	760	Arley	WH	3.1
				534	Barton	NEW	3.7	690	Salako	COV	2.2	761	Arley	WH	3.1
				535	Barton	NEW	3.7	691	Salako	COV	2.2	762	Arley	WH	3.1
				536	Barton	NEW	3.7	692	Salako	COV	2.2	763	Arley	WH	3.1
				537	Barton	NEW	3.7	693	Salako	COV	2.2	764	Arley	WH	3.1
				538	Barton	NEW	3.7	694	Salako	COV	2.2	765	Arley	WH	3.1
				539	Barton	NEW	3.7	695	Salako	COV	2.2	766	Arley	WH	3.1
				540	Barton	NEW	3.7	696	Salako	COV	2.2	767	Arley	WH	3.1
				541	Barton	NEW	3.7	697	Salako	COV	2.2	768	Arley	WH	3.1
				542	Barton	NEW	3.7	698	Salako	COV	2.2	769	Arley	WH	3.1
				543	Barton	NEW	3.7	699	Salako	COV	2.2	770	Arley	WH	3.1
				544	Barton	NEW	3.7	700	Salako	COV	2.2	771	Arley	WH	3.1
				545	Barton	NEW	3.7	701	Salako	COV	2.2	772	Arley	WH	3.1
				546	Barton	NEW	3.7	702	Salako	COV	2.2	773	Arley	WH	3.1
				547	Barton	NEW	3.7	703	Salako	COV	2.2	774	Arley	WH	3.1
				548	Barton	NEW	3.7	704	Salako	COV	2.2	775	Arley	WH	3.1
				549	Barton	NEW	3.7	705	Salako	COV	2.2	776	Arley	WH	3.1
				550	Barton	NEW	3.7	706	Salako	COV	2.2	777	Arley	WH	3.1
				551	Barton	NEW	3.7	707	Salako	COV	2.2	778	Arley	WH	3.1
				552	Barton	NEW	3.7	708	Salako	COV	2.2	779	Arley	WH	3.1
				553	Barton	NEW	3.7	709	Salako	COV	2.2	780	Arley	WH	3.1
				554	Barton	NEW	3.7	710	Salako	COV	2.2	781	Arley	WH	3.1
				555	Barton	NEW	3.7	711	Salako	COV	2.2	782	Arley	WH	3.1
				556	Barton	NEW	3.7	712	Salako	COV	2.2	783	Arley	WH	3.1
				557	Barton	NEW	3.7	713	Salako	COV	2.2	784	Arley	WH	3.1
				558	Barton	NEW	3.7	714	Salako	COV	2.2	785	Arley	WH	3.1
				559	Barton	NEW	3.7	715	Salako	COV	2.2	786	Arley	WH	3.1
				560	Barton	NEW	3.7	716	Salako	COV	2.2	787	Arley	WH	3.1
				561	Barton	NEW	3.7	717	Salako	COV	2.2	788	Arley	WH	3.1
				562	Barton	NEW	3.7	718	Salako	COV	2.2	789	Arley	WH	3.1
				563	Barton	NEW	3.7	719	Salako	COV	2.2	790	Arley	WH	3.1
				564	Barton	NEW	3.7	720	Salako	COV	2.2	791	Arley	WH	3.1
				565	Barton	NEW	3.7	721	Salako	COV	2.2	792	Arley	WH	3.1
				566	Barton	NEW	3.7	722	Salako	COV	2.2	793	Arley	WH	3.1
				567	Barton	NEW	3.7	723	Salako	COV	2.2	794	Arley	WH	3.1
				568	Barton	NEW	3.7	724	Salako	COV	2.2	795	Arley	WH	3.1
				569	Barton	NEW	3.7	725	Salako	COV	2.2	796	Arley	WH	3.1
				570	Barton	NEW	3.7	726	Salako	COV	2.2	797	Arley	WH	3.1
				571	Barton	NEW	3.7	727	Salako	COV	2.2	798	Arley	WH	3.1
				572	Barton	NEW	3.7	728	Salako	COV	2.2	799	Arley	WH	3.1
				573	Barton	NEW	3.7	729	Salako	COV	2.2	800	Arley	WH	3.1
				574	Barton	NEW	3.7	730	Salako	COV	2.2	801	Arley	WH	3.1
			</												

The first step towards a working constitution

New lists of "working peers" were announced yesterday – which prompts an obvious question. If only a minority of members of the House of Lords work, what purpose do the rest serve? The simple answer is that non-working peers cling on in membership of this genteel club by the flames because, despite recent spasms, we remain constitutionally inert, stuck in the aspic of tired tradition. Generations of political leaders – take a bow Jim Callaghan, curtsy Lady Thatcher – have wilfully refused to confront the anomalies ... and with them the sheer inefficiency of our system of making law.

The new lists are, in part, predictable party pay-off – who said we do not operate a spoils system in this country? Still, some of the names glitter. Maurice Saatchi, whatever we may think of his contributions to the art of political advertising, is a man of wide experience and taste. Provided he can bring himself to throw off the shackles of party decorum, his contributions to debate on, say, arts funding will be worth listening to. Liz Symons, in charge of that most anomalous of trade unions, the Association of First Division Civil Servants, has made herself a monitor of fair practice in Whitehall. Sir Richard Rogers is more than a renowned architect: he has interesting views on urban form, the future of London and urban living generally. Per-

haps subsequent debates will give the lie to Bagehot's aphorism that the cure for admiring the House of Lords was to go and look at it.

But a few good names on party lists are no substitute for reform. The time has never been riper. If even the House of Windsor can muster a think-in on the shape of the monarchy as the century turns, then the political class of this country has no excuse finally to engage in the renewal and revitalisation of the institutions of governance. Reform of the Lords is not an act of vandalism or mindless "linking". The only object is to make malfunctioning, underperforming government work better.

There are three options. The first, outright abolition of the Lords, is made suspect by the way it would further concentrate political and legislative power in a single chamber, the record of which is so second-rate, as we have reported in recent days and months. Of course the House of Commons could be more fairly elected – reflecting more proportionately the party and attitudinal make-up of electors. But to make it the sole carrier of collective will would remove an opportunity for revision, and reflection, of a kind that a second chamber could offer. Bicameral government is the norm in the Western world, for the good reason that good government is perceived to be second-thoughts government. Most jurisdictions attempt in

their second chambers to draw in what used to be called "bottom", a capacity to reflect which does not entirely correlate with senatorial age but is born of experience. You don't have to go all the way with Harold Macmillan in believing "calm deliberation untangles every knot" to welcome the retention of an upper chamber.

And if it is to stay as part of a legislative process it should be elected. The condition of modern democracy is a jealous one. If government is to be for the people and by the people, we cannot tolerate a second chamber based on the competing principles of

aristocracy or autocracy. The House of Lords is a weird and wonderful hybrid of blood, executive will and patronage – plus a smattering of merit and whatever it is that the bench of Anglican bishops now bring to the party. (Even the Tories, pretended keepers of the Constitution, find it hard to justify the present composition of the Lords. It comes close to the position of those members of the pre-1832 Commons who argued that the fate of England depended on the continuing election of members for Old Sarum – an uninhabited mound outside Salisbury.)

Election matters – which is why

Labour's short-term plan for the Lords is in many ways a worst-of-both-worlds solution: the chamber is retained as a part of the law-making procedure but remains unelected. Better by far to confront this choice: either emancipate the Lords from the formal business of law-making or else formalise the bicameral system and elect the members of the upper house.

A purely deliberative chamber – the third option – might, for example, have the right to call for papers and persons (as the parliamentary formula goes), even to have sight of proposals for law or the text of bills. Its findings would command attention because of their cogency and weight but it would have no formal share in making law. Such a chamber might well include the likes of Peter Gummer since, like it or not, PR people are now significant players. But it would need to draw on a pool of talent wider than party whips' wish lists. Its ranks would include rabbis and cardinals as well as bishops, company as well as permanent secretaries and, of course, more women.

But, attractive though aspects of such a proposal sound, it runs second-best to the creation in Britain of what exists in the United States as in Germany – a senate or legislative council, elected and possessing a plenitude of power but distinct from the house of representatives or national assembly below it. Elected for longer terms,

elected from the regions or elected on principles of proportionality, all its members would be "working peers" – working at the business of collecting and spending the public's money, at making and monitoring the laws, at deliberating on the affairs and more accurately expressing the will of the peoples and nations of the United Kingdom than the present set-up possibly can. Let's hope yesterday's announcement is a weak but cheerful premonition of full-scale reform.

All the skills of a lawyer

The London School of Economics was once the hotbed of socialism. It did of course also produce generations influenced rightwards by Robbins, Popper and von Hayek. Still, Sidney Webb will be spinning in his grave at the results of a survey out today. LSE is the preferred source of recruits to those most conservative professions, banking and accountancy. According to the survey LSE now offers Oxbridge formidable competition in the attractiveness of its students to employers. Not that employers all make fine judgements. Law firms want them to be clever, true, but "in law social skills don't matter". It doesn't take much contact with a solicitor to confirm the point.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No apology for a summer of research

Sir: Your leader ("Lessons of the scramble for university places", 19 August) proposes one explanation for current admissions procedures: "It looks as though the nation's academics are reluctant to give up their research, trips to foreign universities or just their month in the Dordogne for the sake of ... a post A-level admissions system that will secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people." I would like to offer a different perspective.

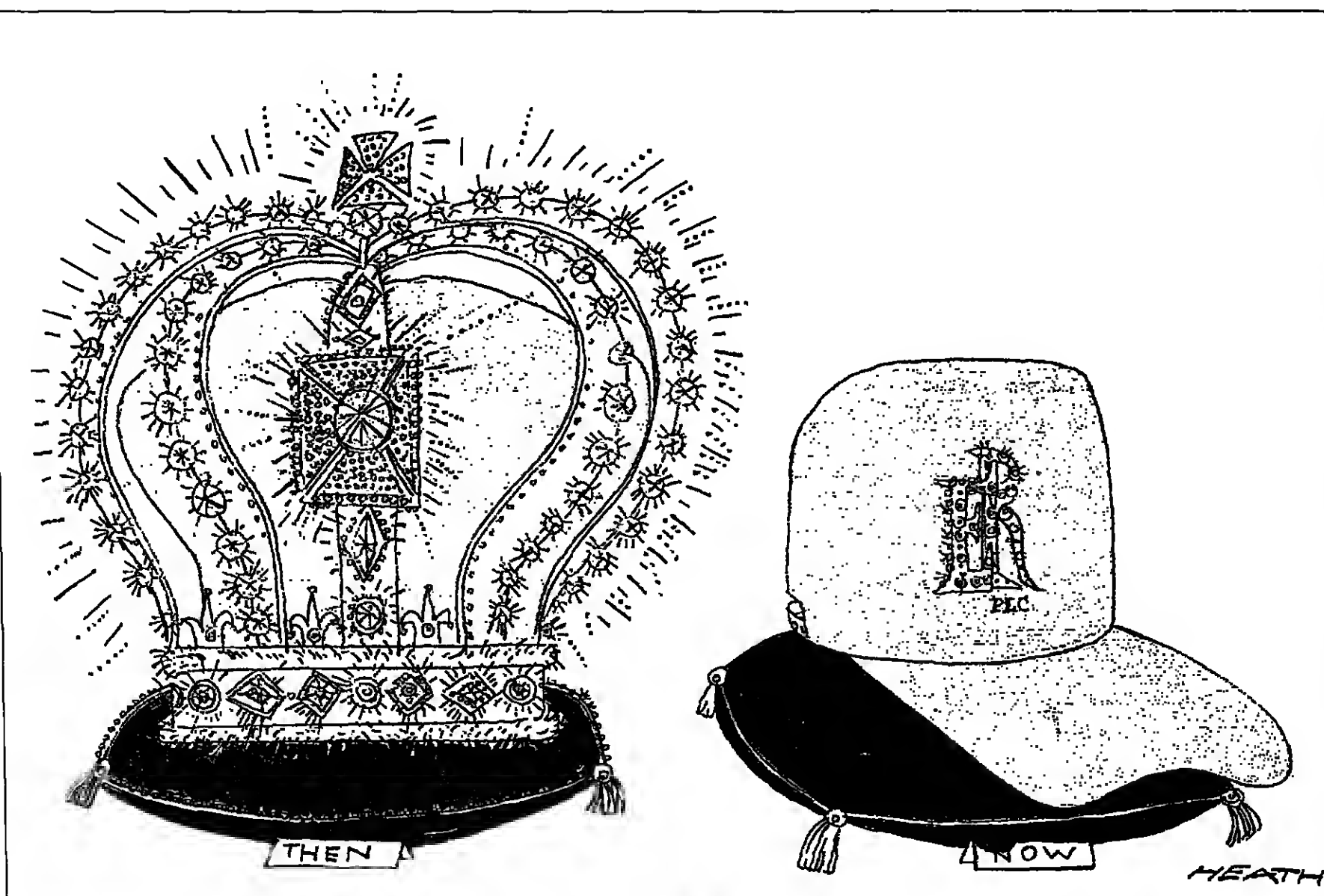
Our universities are built on the twin pillars of teaching and research. The range of courses, quality of tuition and educational opportunities provided by research-led universities depend crucially on the quality and diversity of lecturers' research. A research community which is able to recruit and retain the best educators, to offer the most innovative courses of study, to forge links with sister institutions around the world and to attract the cream of visiting professors, provides an unrivalled learning environment. I am not embarrassed to refuse to "give up my research", partly because that would be tantamount to giving up on my students, too. Research is what I am paid (not much) to do.

But my research is under threat. With deep cuts in government funding and declining staff-student ratios come extra teaching, extra exam setting and marking, additional pastoral responsibilities and more administration, to say nothing of our monstrously resource-intensive quality assessment procedures and the time and money we are now obliged to waste competing in the educational "marketplace". Research gets squeezed out to evenings and weekends. The summer recess (from the beginning of July, when examination boards are completed, to the start of September, when meetings resume) is now the only period in which conferences, networking with colleagues in institutions abroad and summer research projects may be undertaken. A month in the Dordogne sounds very attractive, but I have only managed one, 11-day summer holiday in the last three years.

PAUL ROBERTS
Law Department
University of Nottingham

Sir: It was sad to see such a superficial analysis of the university admissions process in your leader. Much as I sympathise with the 40,000 candidates at present entering the uncertainty of the clearing system, I cannot see that any procedure requiring 400,000 candidates to be assessed and offered university places within a period of six weeks in August and September will improve the situation and "secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people".

For all its faults our present system does ensure that over 85 per cent of candidates secure a place in a university of their choice in good time to organise their finances and accommodation; it enables students with special needs and disabilities to be assessed sympathetically; it allows overseas students time to secure visas and funding; above all, it fits candidates to courses which will suit them, producing a university student population with the lowest drop-out rate of anywhere in the world, which is the envy of all our competitors.



Crown jewels

We would all welcome a post-qualification applications system and I only wish it was as easy to implement as you suggest. All we ask in Cambridge is that the process gives us time to interview all our candidates and select carefully: over 90 per cent of all our candidates achieve at least three A grades at A-level, and assessment by A-level grades alone would be unacceptable both to the colleges and to most students and schools. Equally, medical schools and universities offering teacher training courses all require personal interviews.

We could, of course, go back to the post A-level system which Cambridge operated happily for many years. This, however, required all students to take a year off between school and university. Alternately, we could look at introducing a four-term year into schools. This suggestion has been much welcomed by many educationalists and parents, and would enable the final school examinations to be taken earlier in the year without a significant loss of teaching time.

SUSAN STOBBS
Rushmore College, Cambridge

Sir: I am puzzled by the enthusiasm for post-A-level entry to university. There would be little advantage to students in terms of time saved during preparation for A-levels. They would not indeed have to apply to universities, but they would still need to do the research about institutions and courses, go to open days and talk to lecturers in order to make an informed choice about where to apply when they receive their results.

Moreover, a considerable proportion of places would be filled before the A-level results came out.

More than 30 per cent of undergraduates are now mature students, most of whom do not take A-levels in the year of their application. To this group could be added applicants to Oxbridge, which would still continue to interview and make offers pre-A-level. It is clear that very soon pressure would build up, at least from the better candidates, to be made pre-A-level, informal offers by the institution of their choice.

This is not to say that the present system works well, but there is a simple alternative: encourage students to take a year out and apply post-A-level. Applicants would then have their A-level results, and their preparation for examinations need not be interrupted by research about degree courses. In my experience, students who have had a year out come to university with a more mature and focused attitude to study. In addition, they could use a year out to save some money so that they graduated encumbered with fewer debts.

Dr STEPHEN TAYLOR
Reading, Berkshire

Give time for abortion reform

Sir: Recent news stories – from the destruction of human embryos to the horrific examples of "selective termination" have reinforced the widespread belief that our abortion law must be changed.

But the will of the majority, in the country and among MPs, will continue to be thwarted as long as

the pro-abortionists in Parliament are allowed to exercise an effective veto on all attempts at reform. The key is the shortage of parliamentary time, which enables any private member's Bill to be "talked out" by even a handful of opponents.

David Steel's Abortion Bill was able to succeed in 1967 only because the then Labour administration made government time available for its passage. For governments thereafter to claim that they have remained neutral on abortion because they have allowed free votes on the issue, while at the same time they have consistently refused to provide government time for Bills seeking to modify the Act, has been dishonourable and disingenuous.

FRANCIS BROWN
Kington upon Hull, Humberside

A choice of identities

Sir: The Tories' huffing and puffing over what flags and symbols should or should not appear on the proposed identity card for British citizens ("UK flag row locks ID card", 19 August) is what we have come to expect from them, rather than a simple solution.

As possession of the card is to be voluntary, presumably individuals will have to fill in an application form to acquire one. They could simply be asked to tick a box saying if they want the Union Flag depicted on it as well as the European Union symbol.

It would be hardly more complicated to let the Scots and Welsh have their own national flags on it if they want.

MARTYN LUMLEY
Wallasey, Wirral

Picking a chairman

Sir: Paul Donovan (article, 7 August) commented on the procedures used in the selection of Sir Fredrick Crawford as chairman designate of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

It is dismissive of Mr Donovan to state that "the Home Office boasted that the selection for this post was one of the first to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life". Surely leadership in this area should be commended, not ridiculed.

As a result of the Nolan recommendations, I was appointed, in November 1995, as the first Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments to monitor, regulate and provide advice on departments' appointment procedures. I will also investigate written complaints about specific public appointments. In April this year I published a Code of Practice for Public Appointments Procedures and guidance for departments, both of which came into effect on 1 July. Many departments, including the Home Office, have been applying the

Code of Practice's seven principles (which include appointment on merit, independent scrutiny and openness and transparency) to their appointments procedures for some time, well in advance of the July deadline.

Amongst other things Paul Donovan argued that the advertisement for the appointment which he was questioning, "was not widely published". The post was advertised in three newspapers and a firm of executive search consultants was also used. In addition, the list of volunteers held in the Public Appointments Unit was scrutinised. The result of these measures was a total of 124 candidates from whom Sir Fredrick was chosen.

Sir LEONARD PEACH
Commissioner for Public Appointments
London SW1

Irish minefield

Sir: I fully share your desire (leading article, 12 August) to see Mr Major receive the reward that Gladstone and Lloyd George received for their efforts in Ireland.

The former saw the Whig and Radical wings of his party, including the dynamic Joseph Chamberlain, defect to the Tories in protest, leading to the effective exclusion of the Liberals from power for 20 years. The efforts of the latter, that culminated in partition, were a major contributing factor to the Tories ending their support for him. Both men thus faded from being major political players.

STEPHEN MACE
Sevenoaks, Kent

Heroes of the French beaches

Sir: Royan, the west coast of France. Last week I was on the beach with my eight-year-old son, Jack, building sand castles. He had been running back and forth to the sea for water with his bucket and suddenly he disappeared. Since our arrival on the beach, crowds had descended. My son became disorientated and got lost.

When he didn't come back I went to look for him in the water as Jack is a keen swimmer. Although only 15 minutes had ticked by I was chilled with fear whilst feeling like an idiot. How could I lose my son who was virtually under my feet? My French "towel neighbour" urged me to inform the *poste de secours* (help point) which I did. This service is staffed by young men and women in their early twenties. They are a real *Baywatch* team, energetic, professional, and tanned. I found one member on the beach, armed with a lifejacket and floats, and he immediately sprang into action on his walkie talkie. Within minutes a public announcement was made on the beach that Jack was missing. Jack heard his name and knew that help was coming. He was then not afraid to be led away by an official (in swimming gear) when he was found. I am very grateful to that team. I explained to Messrs *Baywatch* that no such service existed in the UK and they replied that only Australia, the US and France now had such a facility.

Following the tragic disappearance of the Loughlin children on a beach in Norfolk and knowing of other sorts of emergencies that can arise when hundreds or thousands of people get together isn't it time the UK found its own *Baywatch* teams?

LIZ LOUGHNAN
London SE24

Graveyard for Brent Spar

Sir: Your report (15 August) on disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform refers to the more colourful proposals offered in response to Shell's trawl of ideas. Did none of the contenders suggest the cheapest solution: deep ocean sinking? Now that the hysteria which greeted the suggestion when it was originally put forward has faded, we can take a more rational view.

The essential point which was not made at the time is that the Western Approaches of the North Atlantic are a graveyard of millions of tons of ships lost through natural and unnatural causes. During 1942/43 alone about 12 million tons of merchant vessels were sunk, along with a considerable number of naval ships, U-boats and aircraft. As far as we can tell no one has suffered any subsequent harm, despite the fact that those ships carried practically every form of man-made substances and artefacts.

Pull the plug, note the Nuvast readings, then forget it.

G A HENWOOD
Goring, Oxfordshire

Absent savant

Sir: Week 3, Day 1 of the DIY University and still no mention of Michel Foucault. What's going on?

CHRIS MOORHOUSE
Sheffield

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
(Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Everton out to repeat the magic

Football

Alex Ferguson and Kevin Keegan have had very different experiences in the past 10 days but both are equally desperate for three points tonight.

While Ferguson, the Charity Shield already safely in the Old Trafford boardroom, sends his new-look Manchester United out in front of the Premiership's record crowd against Everton, Keegan's Newcastle must get back to basics when Wimbledon visit Tyne-side.

The Dons were shot down in flames and style on Saturday, Eric Cantona, Denis Irwin and that David Beckham wondergoal giving United the perfect start to the defence of their crown.

Newcastle, meanwhile, were being cut down to size by Joe Royle's pumped-up troops and Ferguson, who gives home debuts to Jordi Cruyff and Karel Poborsky, has no doubts the Merseysiders will be keen to silence the majority of the anticipated 55,000-plus crowd.

Poborsky, on the bench on Saturday, comes in on the right flank following Roy Keane's knee surgery, with Beckham partnering Nicky Butt in the middle.

Ferguson believes his dug-out view of the reality of the English game means the Czech "Express Train" is both forewarned and forearmed. "Karel had a good look at Wimbledon on Saturday," said the United manager. "And it was an experience, I can tell you that."

"I think that Everton will also play the long ball. There's a little bit of Wimbledon about their style but they perhaps have one or two better footballers."

As for his new boys, Ferguson, still without Ryan Giggs, said: "They're both very good footballers. I just think they have just got to get used to our game."

"They understand that all right but the most important thing is that they have the ability to perform and do well on a stage like Old Trafford and at the highest level."

"Karel showed some nice touches in the friendly against Inter Milan last week and Jordi could quite easily have had a hat-trick against Wimbledon."

Everton, though, were boosted by the way they blew Newcastle out of the picture on Saturday, and Joe Royle will be looking to Duncan Ferguson and former United favourite

Andrei Kanchelskis to undermine the champions as they did Newcastle.

Royle is without skipper Dave Watson, who damaged medial ligaments against the Tyne-siders, with Craig Short partnering David Unsworth in the middle of the back four.

A towering header by Ferguson beat United at Goodison two seasons ago, and with the Scotland manager, Craig Brown, due at Old Trafford before finalising his squad for next week's World Cup qualifier in Austria, the giant striker will be looking to repeat the dose.

Certainly Everton's performance at the weekend has raised the belief in the Merseysiders' camp, as John Ebbrell, who along with mid-field partner Joe Parkinson will provide a combative test for Butt and Beckham, admitted.

"I thought we played really well in the first half on Saturday, and looked comfortable in the second, and it was just the sort of start to the season we wanted," said the former England under-21 man.

"The way we played on Saturday has given us a massive boost. Now we've already got a win it means we won't be under any pressure at Old Trafford. We know we can win there if we play as well as we did against Newcastle."

While United and Everton are both aiming to build on their brilliant starts, the sides they beat so comprehensively on Saturday have wounded pride to restore.

Keegan's judgement in splashing out so much for Alan Shearer without spending a penny on plugging the alarming leaks in his defence has been called into question after the Charity Shield and Goodison Park maulings.

Colombian Faustino Asprilla is back from suspension for Newcastle, and the Magpies manager confirmed the £7m South American would play, although he did not indicate who would be left out.

Keith Gillespie, who made way after Asprilla's arrival from Parma last season, could be the odd man out again, assuming that Shearer and Les Ferdinand again start together.

More worrying than his side's display up front was the shoddiness they demonstrated as Ferguson's aerial threat severely disturbed their composure on Saturday.

Hard-hitting Chang conjures a flying start in the Hamlet Cup



Michael Chang unleashes a backhand on his way to a 6-1, 6-3 victory over David Prinosi in the first round of the Hamlet Cup in Commack, New York

Photograph: AP

Clark puts faith in new-look Campbell

Nottingham Forest take on the Premiership new boys, Sunderland, today with their manager, Frank Clark, urging Kevin Campbell to show more of the "real" thing.

Campbell doubled his Forest goal tally with his hat-trick against Coventry at Highfield Road last weekend after an injury-wrecked first season. Now with a North-east one-two at the City Ground in the space of three days - Middlesbrough are the visitors on Saturday - Clark is looking for the striker to continue his side's flying start. "That hat-trick will certainly have not done Kevin's confidence any harm - but he's not going to score three goals every game," Clark said.

"He has got to keep working for the team the way he has been doing. He's done well right from pre-season and last Saturday was a big lift for him after the bad time he had last season. I am sure we will see the real Kevin Campbell this season, and he is looking the kind of striker I thought he would go on to become when I signed him."

"However, we have all got to make sure we don't throw away the work of Saturday when, apart from the result, the performance was also very good. Sunderland will be full of it."

With newly promoted clubs, you always find the enthusiasm and newness of being in the Premier League keeps them firing in the early part of the season."

Bryan Roy, another striker with plenty to prove after last season's disappointing form, is back in training after a hamstring injury ruled him out last Saturday. But he must wait to see whether he will earn a recall, and probably the best he can hope for is a place on the substitutes' bench against a Sunderland side likely to see Niall Quinn making his full debut up front.

While Forest look to build on their opening-day triumph, the Aston Villa manager, Brian Little, is already aware of the danger of losing early touch with the pacemakers. He is anxious for his side to quickly redress the balance when they entertain Blackburn Rovers today after the reversal against Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough. "Last season we were seldom beaten two matches in a row and nearly always bounced back from a defeat with a positive performance."

"As a result, we managed to stay in touch at the top of the division nearly all the way through. Last season we got off to a great start with the win over

Manchester United, and that set us up for the remainder of the year."

Savo Milosevic, the Astoria Villa striker, is again ruled out with an Achilles injury and has been ordered to rest this week. Julian Joachim is in contention for a place in the starting line-up after impressing as substitute against the Owls. He could partner Dwight Yorke up front, with Tommy Johnson reverting to his preferred deeper role behind the front two, from where he can run at defenders.

Rovers, still suffering from the despondent effects of Alan Shearer's £15m departure, could make changes after their opening-day defeat at the hands of Spurs.

The Norwegian international Lars Bohinen has recovered from a hamstring injury, and the Scottish midfielder Billy McKinlay is free to play after suspension, though a leg strain might again rule him out.

Leicester City could recall the player who clinched their place back in the Premiership when they name their side for today's home encounter with an unchanged Southampton. Steve Claridge, who ousted the play-off decider against Crystal Palace, is back in training after an ankle injury.

Gullit plays it cool

Rund Gullit is doing his best to play down pre-match talk that Chelsea's game with Middlesbrough tonight is a showdown between Fabrizio Ravanelli and Gianluca Vialli.

The two Italians, who helped Juventus win the European Cup, meet in a keenly anticipated head-to-head at Stamford Bridge. But Gullit, the Chelsea player-manager, has emphasised that there will be 20 other players on the pitch.

He said: "Of course it is exciting for the fans to have players like these on the same pitch. But it is not just about one player, whether it is Ravanelli or Vialli. It is up to us to show our skills in stopping Ravanelli scoring."

Ravanelli had a sensational debut, scoring a hat-trick against Liverpool, while Vialli got no closer than hitting the post in Chelsea's goalless draw at Southampton.

Gullit said: "We have to play better than we did on Sunday. We have had a team meeting where I told the players what I thought and they told me what they thought."

Vialli admitted that he is still short of full match fitness but said: "I am looking forward to seeing Ravanelli and congratulating him on his hat-trick - I just hope he doesn't do it against us."

Stapleton sweats as Lalas leads counter-Revolution

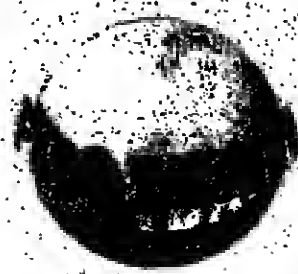
United States

Frank Stapleton knew he was not first choice as coach of New England Revolution when he joined the Major Soccer League bandwagon at the start of the year - but he probably expected an easier ride.

As Revolution have struggled at the wrong end of the Eastern Conference, Stapleton has had flak for dropping a classy playmaker, Argentina's Alberto Naveda, and replacing him with a more defensive midfielder. Now the former Republic of Ireland centre-forward has come under fire from one of American soccer's heroes: Alexi Lalas.

Lalas, a veteran of the 1994 World Cup, left Revolution mid-season to play for his country at the Olympic Games. Now Stapleton has dropped him too, and questioned his dedication to the club. "This is a joke," Lalas stonied. "The audacity of someone to question my commitment to New England Revolution boggles my mind."

However, Lalas should not assume that the club's supporters will take his side. Before he went to the Olympics, Revolution's excellent fanzine, *Pictures of Chairman Mao*, ran not one but two articles highly critical of Lalas, claiming that he was interested only in promoting himself and not in the club. "Even his rock band sucks," wrote one angry Bostonian.



AROUND THE WORLD

France

Scotland's John Collins, now with Monaco, was not the only British player to move across the Channel during the summer, and two other émigrés scored last weekend. Phil Gray, the Northern Irish striker who helped Sunderland win the First Division last term, opened his account for Nancy, while Allan Johnston (Place of Hearts) was on target for Rennes.

Johnston has been joined at Rennes by another Scotsman, Gary Smith from Aberdeen, while Jamie Fullarton, an Under-21 cap, has distressed hard-up St Mirren by moving to Bastia for nothing. Chris Makin, a highly rated England Under-21 full-back, was expected to move to a Premiership club for a big fee

when his contract at Oldham expired in June. Marseille had different ideas, however, and took him off to the south of France on another "Bosman" free.

Germany

The Bosman effect is also being felt in Germany. Franz Beckenbauer, the Bayern Munich president, described the first day of the new season as "the start of a new era - football without frontiers as a result of the Bosman ruling. On the first weekend of the Bundesliga, 16 goals were scored by foreign players while only 12 came from German players."

The fact that the Bundesliga will also get a place in the Champions' League next season won't hurt - because we'll be champions again," Beckenbauer added. Another awesome might lead to effigy: Kaiser being burned in Dortmund.

Italy

Leonardo Riccardi, gentleman striker, was at the Italian Serie A camp told to get his hair cut. He agreed - as long as he was offered a contract and the club paid for the visit to the barber. The club president, Antonio Simeoli, agreed.

Rupert Mather

Today's hidden personality

The Tottenham and England winger Darren Anderton, who was denied the adulation of the nation by the width of a post during extra time of the Euro 96 semi-final against Germany. Rated at around £8m, his League appearances last season were severely restricted by a series of niggling injuries, but he impressed his former Spurs manager Terry Venables sufficiently during a late-season comeback to earn a place in the England squad. Widely regarded as the fulcrum around which the present Spurs side operates and the key to Tottenham's trophy ambitions.

IN THE INDEPENDENT TOMORROW

Derek Pringle looks forward to the final Test between England and Pakistan

The first step towards a working constitution

New lists of "working peers" were announced yesterday - which prompts an obvious question. If only a minority of members of the House of Lords work, what purpose do the rest serve? The simple answer is that non-working peers cling on in membership of this genteel club by the Thames because, despite recent spasms, we remain constitutionally inert, stuck in the aspic of tired tradition. Generations of political leaders - take a bow Jim Callaghan, curtsy Lady Thatcher - have wilfully refused to confront the anomalies ... and with them the sheer inefficiency of our system of making law.

The new lists are, in part, predictable party pay-off - who said we do not operate a spoils system in this country? Still, some of the names glitter. Maurice Saatchi, whatever we may think of his contributions to the art of political advertising, is a man of wide experience and taste. Provided he can bring himself to throw off the shackles of party decorum, his contributions to debate on, say, arts funding will be worth listening to. Liz Symons, in charge of that most anomalous of trade unions, the Association of First Division Civil Servants, has made herself a monitor of fair practice in Whitehall. Sir Richard Rogers is more than a renowned architect; he has interesting views on urban form, the future of London and urban living generally. Per-

haps subsequent debates will give the lie to Bagehot's aphorism that the cure for admiring the House of Lords was to go and look at it.

But a few good names on party lists are no substitute for reform. The time has never been riper. If even the House of Windsor can muster a think-in on the shape of the monarchy as the century turns, then the political class of this country has no excuse finally to engage in the renewal and revitalisation of the institutions of governance. Reform of the Lords is not an act of vandalism or mindless "finkering". The only object is to make malfunctioning, underperforming government work better.

There are three options. The first, outright abolition of the Lords, is made suspect by the way it would further concentrate political and legislative power in a single chamber, the record of which is so second-rate, as we have reported in recent days and months. Of course the House of Commons could be more fairly elected - reflecting more proportionately the party and attitudinal make-up of electors. But to make it the sole carrier of collective will would remove an opportunity for revision, and reflection, of a kind that a second chamber could offer. Bicameral government is the norm in the Western world, for the good reason that good government is perceived to be second-thoughts government. Most jurisdictions attempt in



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their second chambers to draw in what used to be called "bottom", a capacity to reflect which does not entirely correlate with senatorial age but is born of experience. You don't have to go all the way with Harold Macmillan in believing "calm deliberation untangles every knot" to welcome the retention of an upper chamber.

And if it is to stay as part of the legislative process it should be elected. The condition of modern democracy is a jealous one. If government is to be for the people and by the people, we cannot tolerate a second chamber based on the competing principles of

aristocracy or autocracy. The House of Lords is a weird and wonderful hybrid of blood, executive will and patronage - plus a smattering of merit and whatever it is that the bench of Anglican bishops now bring to the party. (Even the Tories, pretended keepers of the Constitution, find it hard to justify the present composition of the Lords. It comes close to the position of those members of the pre-1832 Commons who argued that the fate of England depended on the continuing election of members for Old Sarum - an uninhabited mound outside Salisbury.) Election matters - which is why

Labour's short-term plan for the Lords is in many ways a worst-of-both-worlds solution: the chamber is retained as a part of the law-making procedure but remains unelected. Better by far to confront this choice: either emancipate the Lords from the formal business of law-making or else formalise the bicameral system and elect the members of the upper house.

A purely deliberative chamber - the third option - might, for example, have the right to call for papers and persons (as the parliamentary formula goes), even to have sight of proposals for law or the text of bills. Its findings would command attention because of their cogency and weight but it would have no formal share in making law. Such a chamber might well include the likes of Peter Gummer since, like it or not, PR people are now significant players. But it would need to draw on a pool of talent wider than party whips' wish lists. Its ranks would include rabbis and cardinals as well as bishops, company as well as permanent secretaries and, of course, more women.

But, attractive though aspects of such a proposal sound, it runs second-best to the creation in Britain of what exists in the United States as in Germany - a senate or legislative council, elected and possessing a plenitude of power but distinct from the house of representatives or national assembly below it. Elected for longer terms,

elected from the regions or elected on principles of proportionality, all its members would be "working peers" - working at the business of collecting and spending the public's money, at making and monitoring the laws, at deliberating on the affairs and more accurately expressing the will of the peoples and nations of the United Kingdom than the present set-up possibly can. Let's hope yesterday's announcement is a weak but cheerful premonition of full-scale reform.

All the skills of a lawyer

The London School of Economics was once the hotbed of socialism. It did of course; also produce generations of influential rights-advocates. Popper and von Hayek. Still, Sidney Webb will be spinning in his grave at the results of a survey out today: LSE is the preferred source of recruits to those most conservative professions, banking and accountancy. According to the survey LSE now offers Oxbridge (formidable competition in the attractiveness of its students to employers. Not that employers all make fine judgements. Law firms want them to be clever, true, but "in law social skills don't matter". It doesn't take much contact with a solicitor to confirm the point.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No apology for a summer of research

Sir: Your leader ("Lessons of the scramble for university places", 19 August) proposes one explanation for current admissions procedures: "It looks as though the nation's academics are reluctant to give up their research, trips to foreign universities or just their month in the Dordogne for the sake of ... a post A-level admissions system that will secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people." I would like to offer a different perspective.

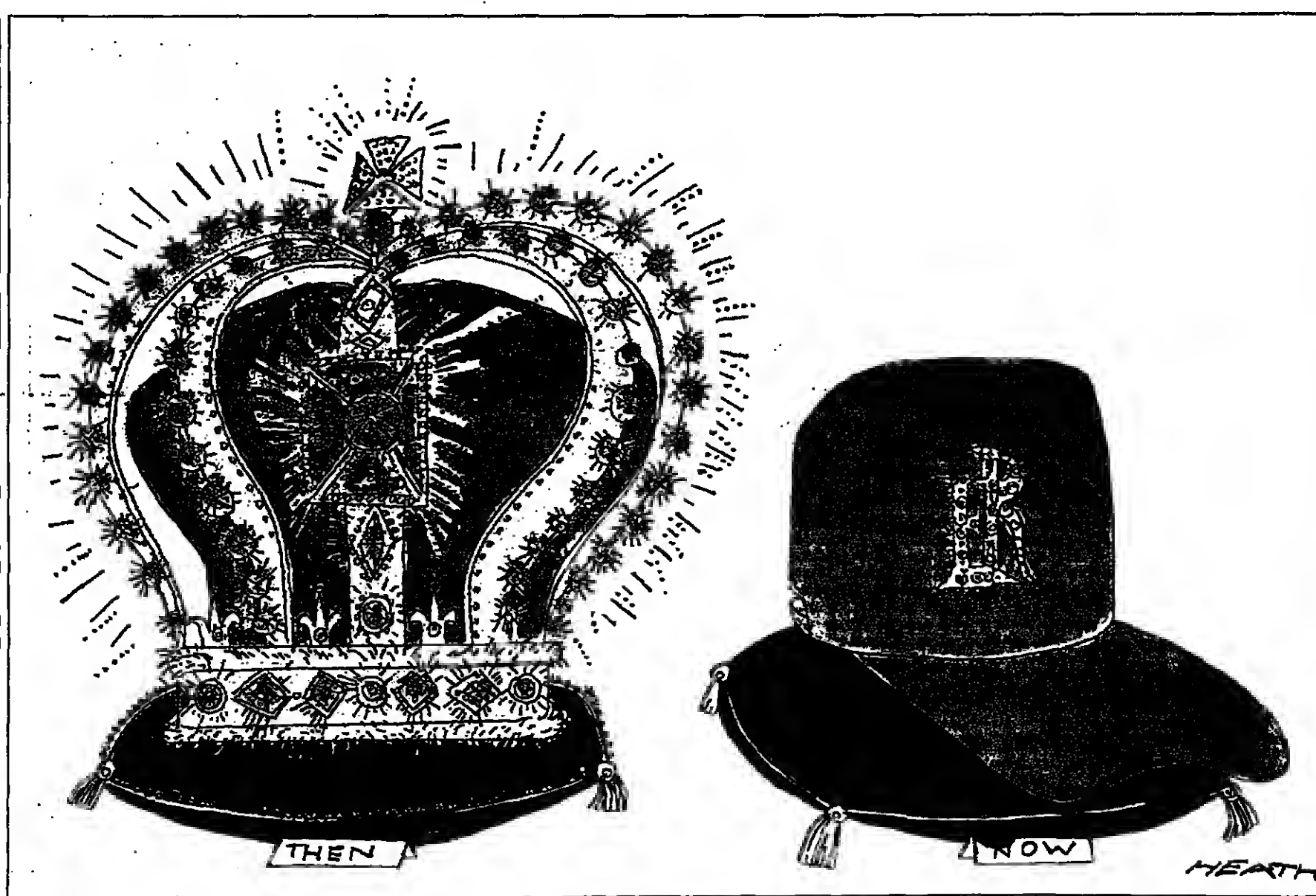
Our universities are built on the twin pillars of teaching and research. The range of courses, quality of tuition and educational opportunities provided by research-led universities depend crucially on the quality and diversity of lecturers' research. A research community which is able to recruit and retain the best educators, to offer the most innovative courses of study, to forge links with sister institutions around the world and to attract the cream of visiting professors, provides an unrivalled learning environment. I am not embarrassed to refuse to "give up my research", partly because that would be tantamount to giving up on my students, too. Research is what I am paid (not much) to do.

But my research is under threat. With deep cuts in government funding and declining staff/student ratios come extra teaching, extra exam setting and marking, additional pastoral responsibilities and more administration, to say nothing of our monstrously resource-intensive quality assessment procedures and the time and money we are now obliged to waste competing in the educational "marketplace". Research gets squeezed out to evenings and weekends. The summer recess (from the beginning of July, when examination boards are completed, to the start of September, when meetings resume) is now the only period in which conferences, networking with colleagues in institutions abroad and substantial research projects may be undertaken. A month in the Dordogne sounds very attractive, but I have only managed one, 10-day summer holiday in the last three years.

PAUL ROBERTS
Law Department
University of Nottingham

Sir: It was sad to see such a superficial analysis of the university admissions process in your leader. Much as I sympathise with the 40,000 candidates at present entering the uncertainty of the clearing system, I cannot see that any procedure requiring 400,000 candidates to be assessed and offered university places within a period of six weeks in August and September will improve the situation and "secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people".

For all its faults our present system does ensure that over 85 per cent of candidates secure a place in a university of their choice in good time to organise their finances and to accommodate; it enables students with special needs and disabilities to be assessed sympathetically; it allows overseas students time to secure visas and funding; above all, it fits candidates to courses which will suit them, producing a university student population with the lowest drop-out rate of anywhere in the world, which is the envy of all our competitors.



Crown jewels

We would all welcome a post-qualification applications system and I only wish it was as easy to implement as you suggest. All we ask in Cambridge is that the process gives us time to interview all our candidates and select carefully: over 60 per cent of all our candidates achieve at least three A grades at A-level, and assessment by A-level grades alone would be unacceptable both to the colleges and to most students and schools. Equally, medical schools and universities offering teacher training courses all require personal interviews.

We could, of course, go back to the post-A-level system which Cambridge operated happily for many years. This, however, required all students to take a year off between school and university. Alternatively, we could look at introducing a four-term year into schools. This suggestion has been much welcomed by many educationalists and parents, and would enable the final school examinations to be taken earlier in the year without a significant loss of teaching time.

More than 30 per cent of undergraduates are now mature students, most of whom do not take A-levels in the year of their application. To this group could be added applicants to Oxbridge, which would still continue to interview and make offers pre-A-level. It is clear that very soon pressure would build up, at least from the better candidates, to be made pre-A-level, informal offers by the institution of their choice.

This is not to say that the present system works well, but there is a simple alternative: encourage students to take a year out and apply post-A-level. Applicants would then have their A-level results, and their preparation for examinations need not be interrupted by research about degree courses. In my experience, students who have had a year out come to university with a more mature and focused attitude to study. In addition, they could use a year out to save some money so that they graduated encumbered with fewer debts.

Dr STEPHEN TAYLOR
Reading, Berkshire

It would be hardly more complicated to let the Scots and Welsh have their own national flags on it if they want.

MARTYN LUMLEY
Wollasey, Wirral

A choice of identities

Sir: The Tories' huffing and puffing over what flags and symbols should or should not appear on the proposed identity card for British citizens ("UK flag row blocks ID card", 19 August) is what we have come to expect from them, rather than a simple solution.

As possession of the card is to be voluntary, presumably individuals will have to fill in an application form to acquire one. They could simply be asked to tick a box saying if they want the Union Flag depicted on it as well as the European Union symbol.

It is dismissive of Mr Donovan to state that "the Home Office boasted that the selection for this post was one of the first to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life". Surely leadership in this area should be commended, not ridiculed.

As a result of the Nolan recommendations, I was appointed, in November 1995, as the first Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments to monitor, regulate and provide advice on departments' appointment procedures. I will also investigate written complaints about specific public appointments. In April this year I published a Code of Practice for Public Appointments Procedures and guidance for departments, both of which came into effect on 1 July. Many departments, including the Home Office, have been applying the

Code of Practice's seven principles (which include appointment on merit, independent scrutiny and openness and transparency) to their appointments procedures for some time, well in advance of the July deadline.

Amongst other things Paul Donovan argued that the advertisement for the appointment which he was questioning, "was not widely published". The post was advertised in three newspapers and a firm of executive search consultants was also used. In addition, the list of volunteers held in the Public Appointments Unit was scrutinised. The result of these measures was a total of 124 candidates from whom Sir Frederick was chosen.

Sir LEONARD PEACH
Commissioner for Public Appointments
London SW7

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Irish minefield

Sir: I fully share your desire (leading article, 12 August) to see Mr Major receive the reward that Gladstone and Lloyd George received for their efforts in Ireland. The former saw the Whig and Radical wings of his party, including the dynamic Joseph Chamberlain, defect to the Tories in protest, leading to the effective exclusion of the Liberals from power for 20 years. The efforts of the latter, that culminated in partition, were a major contributing factor to the Tories ending their support for him. Both men thus faded from being major political players.

STEPHEN MACE
Sevenoaks, Kent

Heroes of the French beaches

Sir: Royan, the west coast of France. Last week I was on the beach with my eight-year-old son, Jack, building sand castles. He had been running back and forth in the sea for water with his bucket and suddenly he disappeared. Since our arrival on the beach, crowds had descended. My son became disorientated and got lost.

When he didn't come back I went to look for him in the water as Jack is a keen swimmer. Although only 15 minutes had ticked by I was chilled with fear whilst feeling like an idiot. How could I lose my son who was virtually under my feet? My French "lowly neighbours" urged me to inform the *poste de secours* (help point) which I did. This service is staffed by young men and women in their early twenties. They are a real *Baywatch* team, energetic, professional, and tanned. I found one member on the beach, armed with a lifejacket and flippers, and he immediately sprang into action on his walkie talkie. Within minutes a public announcement was made on the beach that Jack was missing. Jack heard his name and knew that help was coming. He was then not afraid to be led away by an official (in swimming gear) when he was found. I am very grateful to that team. I explained to Messrs. *Baywatch* that no such service existed in the UK and they replied that only Australia, the US and France now had such a facility.

Following the tragic disappearance of the Loughlin children on a beach in Norfolk and knowing of other sorts of emergencies that can arise when hundreds or thousands of people get together isn't it time the UK found its own *Baywatch* teams?

LIZ LOUGHAN
London SE24

Graveyard for Brent Spar

Sir: Your report (15 August) on disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform refers to the more outlandish proposals offered in response to Shell's straw of ideas. Did none of the contenders suggest the cheapest solution: deep ocean sinking? Now that the hysteria which greeted the suggestion when it was originally put forward has faded, we can take a more rational view.

The essential point which was not made at the time is that the Western Approaches of the North Atlantic are a graveyard of millions of tons of ships lost through natural and unnatural causes. During 1942/43 alone about 12 million tons of merchant vessels were sunk along with a considerable number of naval ships, U-boats and aircraft. As far as we can tell no one has suffered any subsequent harm, despite the fact that those ships carried practically every form of man-made substances and artefacts.

Pull the plug, note the Navsat readings, then forget it.

G A HENWOOD
Goring, Oxfordshire

Absent savant

Sir: Week 3, Day 1 of the DIY University and still no mention of Michel Foucault. What's going on? CHRIS MOORHOUSE
Sheffield

analysis

Farewell to St Trinian's, goodbye to the GCSE

The English exam system has returned to its Eighties élitism. Now testing at 16 must stop, says Judith Judd

The General Certificate of Secondary Education is the exam that died. It died so quietly that nobody noticed. Its enemies moved in slowly, chipping away until they had finished it off and its supporters were too weary to resist. Around 600,000 students take it each year. They think the exam is still alive, but they are wrong. It is no longer the test they think it is and, for those at the bottom, it is a waste of time.

The story began in 1979 when Margaret Thatcher came to power and proposals were already in place from Shirley Williams, Labour's Secretary of State for Education, for a new common exam for all that would replace O-level and the Certificate of Secondary Education. Instinctively, the Conservatives were against it. They saw it as a plot by egalitarian teachers which would lower standards.

But the teachers persisted. They argued that the O-level, though valued by parents and employers, was a highly academic exam designed only for the top 25 per cent of the ability range. CSEs for pupils of average ability were fine except that no one, including employers, thought they were worth much. For the bottom 40 per cent of children, there was nothing at all. The talents of thousands of children were being wasted, teachers suggested, and the nation's economic prosperity was at stake. Help came from an unexpected quarter. Sir Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education, arch free marketeer, friend of Margaret Thatcher, was by nature an academic who liked to decide issues on their intellectual merit. Teachers persuaded him to back the GCSE. He demanded and received from civil servants and school inspectors assurances that bright chil-



Ties that bind: but schools are not serving children as well as they could. The exams they set are only valuable for the brightest

Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

dren would still be stretched and that, in some subjects at least, the brightest would take separate papers. Very suspicious remained. George Walden, former Conservative education minister and backbench MP, asked in the Commons in 1984 whether the new exam, combining O-levels and CSEs, involved "merging up or merging down". Perhaps only Sir Keith could have convinced them that it was not the latter. He was, after all, "one of us".

In 1988, the first candidates sat the new exam. While ministers insisted that the standards of the old O-level would be maintained, the exam itself was very different. In most subjects, course work - done in

class or at home and marked by pupils' own teachers - accounted for at least 25 per cent of the marks and in some subjects all the marks. Teachers said that this was a much fairer way of testing children's ability and motivation. Those who did well in short final exams might not necessarily do as well if they had to sustain the performance throughout a two-year course. There were other differences too. In maths, modern languages and some science syllabuses, there were extra papers for the brightest children. In most subjects there were not. There were common papers and students' performance was to be determined by their answers rather than the questions. Wherever possible,

teachers were determined to avoid dividing pupils into sheep and goats before they started their examination courses as they had done for O-level and CSE. That, they said, would limit ambition and aspiration. The public and employers had discounted those who took CSE. Teachers wanted all GCSE candidates to have the same chance. Even before the first results were published, the exam came under attack from the right-wing media and Conservative MPs. Course work was seen as a cheats' charter. How could the exam boards be sure that it was the pupils' own work? How could they know that all teachers were operating the same standards? Sir Rhodes Boyson, Conservative MP and former education minister, later remarked that GCSE marks were improving because the whole family now sat round the table and did the exam.

The common papers were also a target. Because they were taken by pupils of a very wide range of ability, the first few questions were often very easy. Newspapers mocked them. When the first set of results came out in 1988, a higher proportion of children were getting grades A-C, the equivalent of the old O-level grades. Year by year, the improvement in

results continued and so did the warfare between the teachers and backbench Conservatives. The former argued that the better results were due to increased motivation and harder work because more pupils were worried about getting jobs. The latter said the exam and its marking were getting easier. They spoke of reports of pupils from fee-paying schools getting strings of A

grades and the perennial complaints of employers that no one could spell or punctuate any more. Ministers were in a dilemma. They were desperate not to appear soft on standards but they could not abolish an exam that they had themselves so recently created. And to knock the achievements of 16-year-olds was politically crazy. But, step by step, they began to dismantle the exam. In 1992, John Major announced that course work would be drastically reduced: in no subject would it account for all the marks and in most it would be only 20 per cent. Behind the scenes, plans were set in motion to divide up

enough pressure, they said. They spoke of weeping pupils, distressed that they had scored "only" A. And if we were going to start picking out groups of children, why not pick out the ones at the bottom who needed special help? How about a starred G or a starred F? High-fliers, after all, had always done well in the English education system. Yet every international study showed that it was the children at the bottom of the heap which English schools failed. The reinvention of O-level proceeded apace, helped by the Government's performance tables of exams. These recorded school GCSE scores at all grades but the only ones that counted for most newspapers were the proportion awarded grades A-C. Employers, too, were sceptical about any grade below C. It was true that a higher proportion of children received top grades than in O-level days - 43.5 per cent with 5 A-Cs - but that still left a lot of pupils firmly on the scrapheap. Now, as the nation prepares to debate yet again whether exam standards at 16 are rising or falling, the English exam system is back where it was in the mid-Eighties: divisive, elitist, catering well for those at the top and discounting those at the bottom. Pupils are slotted

Teachers wanted to avoid dividing children into sheep and goats

The Fringe, as seen in black and white

Two weeks ago someone at *The Independent* gave us one of his golden rules on Fringe-going. "Don't go to any student drama".

Thanks a lot, buddy. Ever since then I have been attacked by hordes of students asking me to justify my paper's stance, which of course I have not even tried to do. Student, amateur, hopeful, ambitious productions are the seedbed for the future, yet journalists who have just enjoyed a good (free) slick show at a popular venue will always write off the fringe of the Fringe.

It happened again in *The Observer* last Sunday when someone called Carol Sarfer wrote a diary from Edinburgh saying that the only good things at the Fringe were at the three big venues, the Pleasance, Gilded Balloon and Assembly Rooms. Stick with them, and you'll be safe, she says. The artistic directors of these places know what they are doing and have already picked the best. "It is years now since I

have made an unfortunate mistake and ended up in a draughty church hall watching earnest, callow youths struggle with Ayckbourn".

Well, bully for you, Carol Sarfer. Going out with someone with your sense of adventure and curiosity must be as exciting as going to Knightsbridge to do your shopping, going on holiday in the Dordogne. Someone who thinks earnest, callow youths will opt for Ayckbourn, not Kafka or Camus, someone who thinks if a thing is not on at the Assembly Rooms it must be student drama, is not my idea of a trusty companion on the Fringe.

Actually, the main point of the Fringe is not for the pros to strut their stuff at the big three venues, but for new stuff to come up for air, whether experimental or traditional, at whatever address. Of the best shows I have seen so far, only one, the wonderfully inventive *Let The Donkey Go*, was at a big venue, the Pleasance. The others have all been on the periphery. In fact, one was in



Miles Kington

a shop. Valvona and Crolla is the best Italian food shop in Edinburgh, and every year one of the owners, Philip Contini, has teamed up with singer/storyteller Mike Maran and several musicians to do an hour's show at lunchtime in a tiny theatre space at the back. This year they have come up with an utterly engrossing and enchanting version of Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, which is the only show in town which gets the audience stomping along with Italian Fascist anthems from the Thirties. I am not quite sure how a local jazz group gets to be part of the Fringe, but if the John Rae Collective had not

been listed as a Fringe attraction at the Iron Café I would not have gone along on Monday to hear them, and to gasp at how good they are - especially, on the night, a guitarist with flying fingers, Kevin McKenzie, and pianist Brian Kellock, who does frightening things to the keyboard. And if I had not got chatting to a young American called Alex Carney at the Assembly Rooms, who was handing out leaflets for the show he had stage managed, I would not have gone along to the French Institute on a whim to see *Slippery When Wet*, a La Mama Theatre production. It was stunning. It is a piece written by the American writer Suzen Murakoshi, featuring just two wonderful actors, herself as a young Japanese American girl and Leland Gantt as the black American man who calls to take her out. For an hour the air between them crackles with mistrust, and hostility, and mutual mockery, and sexual chemistry going wrong, and the sound of racial stereo-

types melting and reforming, until you feel quite exhausted yet uplifted. She is happy to be American. He feels drawn to his roots. "Do you speak Japanese?" he sneers. "Do you speak African?" she counters, and on it goes, the dance of love/hate. There is even an extraordinary nude scene, extraordinary not just because they both have enviable bodies, but because it was the only part of the play where aggression gave way to a kind of tenderness, as if they had shed their attitudes with their clothes.

The whole thing was accompanied by a nearly-on-stage musician, Fred Carl, whose myriad one-man noises were as good as many a complex film score. The acting was wonderful, and even if some of the racial implications are lost on a Briton, I am grateful that I had the unaccountable good sense to go and see it. This is its last week on the Fringe. Go and see it. Unless you are Carol Sarfer, in which case you wouldn't bother. But I guess that is no loss.

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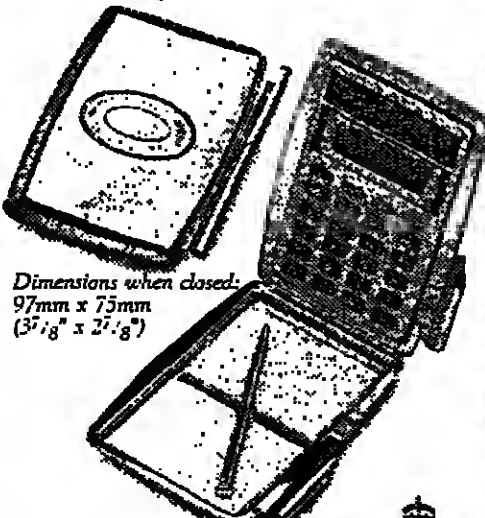
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the commentators

Roses round the door – and blood on the doorstep

Clergy sent to run-down city centres are unprepared for the risks they and their families run

For more than 10 years, I lived in a magical house within walking distance of central London. It had eight bedrooms, huge, high-ceilinged reception rooms, a spiral staircase, stained glass windows, a modern kitchen and a wonderful, enclosed garden with an Albertine rose climbing 30 feet up an old brick wall. We had freehold rights to it, and it did not cost us a penny.

It was an Anglican vicarage located in the poorest ward of the poorest borough in Britain. Around this rather wonderful example of Victorian Gothic fantasy was a wasteland of council housing, a community which was disintegrating, wracked with crime, unemployment, poverty, alienation, and alcohol and drug abuse. There was a level of casual violence here that nothing had prepared me for. My husband, the vicar, went one day to make a visit related to a baptism and noticed a sawn-off shotgun lying on the table. The baby's mother told her man to put it away "because the vicar is here", so he pushed it under the sofa.

We laughed. We went on laughing, in fact, for most of the time we lived there; there is not much else you can do, and anyway I loved it. It is only now, afterwards, living in the country and reading about Christopher Gray and Anthony Couchman, inner-city clergy killed and wounded on the job, that I realise how frightened I ought to have been. For the vicar, for the children and for myself.

I got shot at once, as a matter of fact, with a 22 rifle, through the window of my study. That was scary, but it was also arbitrary and pointless – the assailant was drug-freaked, and certainly without any personal malice. More frightening was the experience of coming home to find a great deal of blood all over the front door steps, apparently flowing from under the door. It was not, in fact, there had been a knife fight on the doorstep. Or the time when it transpired, following a minor burglary, that both the children individually had encountered the thief on the

stairs, and said polite hellos to him: they were so used to strangers. (An interesting side-effect of their immersion in the local community was that when the police asked them to describe the intruder they both knew what he was wearing in some detail, but neither had noticed whether he was black or white.)

We went on behaving in an "open house" policy, but over the years we became more cautious – or less committed; more aware – or less holy. Gradually we acquired basic precautions: a chain on the door, an insistence that the children use it, a burglar alarm, spikes on the garden wall, window grilles; though often it was our insurers' growing reluctance, rather than our good sense, that dictated these developments. And none of these things would have protected anyone from the panicked ring on the bell at night, from the disconcerting realisation that the person you are giving a cup of tea to is simply insane, from the very angry, or the totally desperate.



SARA MAITLAND

We would have gone there anyway, I think, even if we had been better prepared. But the lack of warning and support seems, retrospectively, terrifying. The training my husband went through did not include self-preservation. We needed teaching, not just about physical danger but also about more delicate issues. No one ever spoke about what it meant for children to go to a primary school in which they would be the only child in socio-economic groups A/B/C1/C2. When I asked my 15-year-old what was the best thing about his father not being

a vicar any more, he said, "not being the vicar's kid in school".

The gentlemanly liberalism of the Church of England does not like to talk about class; but it matters. Our children were torn apart by divergent standards. We were once called to my daughter's secondary school by a perplexed headteacher, who had threatened all sorts of extreme horrors in punishment for some minor infringement, and then demanded that the perpetrators "own up". Middle-class ethics dictated that my daughter publicly confess, but refuse to name other names. The head said that no one had ever owned up like that, and she had committed herself to such severity only as a way of making clear to the undetachable offenders the seriousness of the offence.

Less amusingly, a primary school teacher once told us self-righteously, "I did not come to the East End to teach children like yours."

Not many clergy have a background that truly enables them to realise what they are going to. Inner-city ministry carries kudos: it is also a recognised step on the ladder of promotion. The unfortunate sentimentality about "front-line heroes" does not help. There is a further problem with training clergy: although they acquire very few useful survival skills, they tend to acquire considerable arrogance; a failure to know what they do not know, and therefore to know when to seek help. No one, without proper psychiatric training, and within a protective institution, should be "counselling" anyone at 1.30am; projecting, talking to, seeking support for, calming down, perhaps – but counselling ...

In any case, there really is no choice about being there. If the clergy believe they are there to embody Christ, then they will just have to push on with open doors, all hour, on-the-spot, high-contact, risky ministry. After all, He did. I do not regret any of it. I miss it sometimes. I learned a lot. It was

worth the risk – it was even worth the risk in the children. The roses were so beautiful, and the good bits – the warmth, the affection, even some of the high expectations and unearned respect – were very good indeed. After all, you can get killed and raped and maimed almost anywhere, but spiral staircases with moral kudos and a pension are hard to come by.

I could not help but notice that the Bishop of Larking, chair of a bishops' advisory group on urban priority areas, said that there was a "danger" that there might come a time when priests would have to leave the inner cities. That is the point of divergence: they can leave; the other victims of the violence bred of deprivation cannot. It is tragic when a priest is killed or maimed, but only because it is tragic that anyone is so killed or maimed. If the Church of England – or any other Christian group – wants to protect clergy from these dangers, it should be more seriously engaged in ending endemic urban poverty in our inner cities, not in thinking about how to get out.

Curtain's up at the bawdy Globe

Robert Winder celebrates the return of Shakespeare's Wooden O

Shakespeare's Globe reopens for business today, just 383 years after the original playhouse burnt down (when a cannon set fire to the thatch during a performance of *Henry VIII*). It ought to be an occasion for some straightforward celebrating – a few fireworks, and a fête or two – but these days our responses to large-scale cultural projects tend to be sour and a little suspicious. Fears have been expressed that the new Globe will be little more than a mock-Elizabethan theme park: Stratford-upon-Avon, or *Carry on up the King*. Indeed, it is hard not to tremble at the thought of all that yes-my-liegey, all those bawdy wenchies in period bodices clutching baskets full of capons and flagons of rhenish, all those ghostly codpieces poking for the tourists.

Actually, we probably shouldn't complain if these fears turn out to be well-founded. Even in Shakespeare's day the Globe was part of a south-of-the-river leisure complex, a 16th-century Disneyland where people went brotelling before the bear-baiting. Any historical enterprise is bound to risk seeming like an exercise in the most cartoonish sort of nostalgia. But the signs are that the Globe will not necessarily turn out like that. The artistic director, Mark Rylance, is a formidable and not remotely old-fashioned actor whose declared belief that Shakespeare was not actually the author of "the Shakespeare plays" is, however doubtful, a useful sign that he does not regard the man as a sacred cow.

And the fact that he has chosen to open the new space with a performance of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* – one of the most ham-fisted and least popular plays in the Collected Works – suggests that he will not be content simply to turn

out decorous productions of the old favourites. There are, to be sure, moments in the *Two Gents* that sound like nothing so much as a parody of Shakespeare ("I am but a fool, look you, and yet I have the wit to think my master is a kind of a knave; but that's all one, if he be but one knave" etc, etc). But the play is also full of asides and soliloquies that will sit much more comfortably in the uncontrived platform space than they do in a modern theatre.

There, as it were, is the rub.

wrote verse, not a poet who happened to write plays. And his many self-conscious jokes about the stage were written with the Globe in mind.

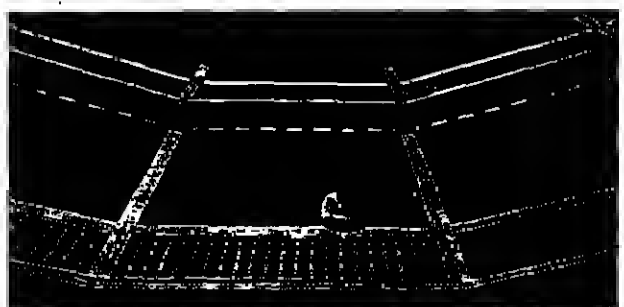
When Prospero drew down the non-existent curtain on the *Tempest* ("Our revels now are ended"), he declared, famously, that the actors, the cloud-capp'd towers and "the great globe itself" would dissolve into thin air. The very motto of the theatre – *Totus mundus agit histrionem* (literally: All the world plays the actor) – later

apologised for the lousy special-effects: "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France? Or may we cram within this wooden O the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?"

That was a nice joke, but in the centuries that followed the theatre world was invaded by a drive towards naturalism from which we have only recently recovered. Now that cinema and television have trounced the stage's ability to create believable sets, it is safe to revert to an undecorated, imaginary space – a playground for the words. So it is not so much that the space should suit the plays, that sitting in an Elizabethan setting should enhance our appreciation of the drama (though it might – there's nothing like a Greek amphitheatre for Greek tragedy), but that the plays should suit the space.

An exercise in nostalgia that wanted to go the whole hog would have to employ boy actors to play women, and speculate about Elizabethan pronunciation; both of which would seem like phoney postures. Nor is the Globe a precise reproduction. At one point it was discovered that the thick wooden pillars holding up the roof of the stage would block the sightlines from the audience, so they were replaced by inauthentic slimmer models. These may yet turn out to be a great loss in Shakespeare's day, they were no doubt useful places for the actors to hide – perhaps Polonius was ducking behind one when he was stabbed through the arras by Hamlet, but they are trifles, e'en so.

The one significant period detail that might have been overlooked concerns the taking of drink. The Globe, like the other theatres of the day, was based on the architecture of an



The Globe is more than an exercise in nostalgia

The desire to see Shakespeare's plays in their original setting is no more daft or reactionary than the desire to listen to classical music on authentic instruments. Indeed, it is possible that there would be more excitement over the reopening if it truly were an exhaustive, scholarly inquiry into the nature of the Shakespearean stage.

Even as it is, the character of the new-old theatre should refresh, rather than costume-dramatise, our idea of what Shakespeare wrote. He was, after all, a playwright who

became the launching-pad for a meditation on life in *As You Like It*. The Globe was the world, and the world was a stage.

There are many more examples of this. When Rosencrantz admitted to Hamlet that yes, the vogue for children's theatre was sweeping all before it, "Hercules and his load too," the audience of the day could look up at the flag fluttering over the Globe, and see Hercules with the world on his back. Shakespeare even gave *Henry V*, possibly the first play to be performed in the Globe in 1599, a narrator to

broil him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident will put it out with bottled ale." There will, no doubt, be a certain amount of cod-Shakespearean waffle in the sandwich bars and cafés that will (it is hoped) spring up on Bankside. Theatregoers can look forward to their Falstaff baps and Macbeth Special brew. But that need not prevent the theatre itself from staging vibrant productions of the plays, in which we can just at last see that never felt a wound.

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WEEK 3 DAY 3

Language

VISTING LECTURER: David Bodanis

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Mel Brooks could just about accept that the adults he met in France could speak French – maybe they went to night classes or something – but how could the little kids do it too? It's certainly not because they were born with the knowledge. Take a newborn French child to Mel Brooks' New York apartment and in a few years it might well be familiar with New York *shick*, but it will know very little about cheeses, subjective variations for *aller*, or the proper lip formation to produce that one sound all English speakers dread, which on vacation we race through elaborate contortions to avoid: the feared past participle of "to have": *eu*.

Let the kid escape back to France though, and it'll end up speaking good French – albeit with a baffling insistence for *le pastrami vous shumuck* instead of Camembert – but even if you watch closely, even if you keep a video trained on it and transcribe every word it hears, you'll never find the moment when its parents sit it down and go through the *Académie Française* grammar books which explain, for every contingency, just where that English-humiliating *eu* is to be dropped in.

It's not just busy French parents. Children never get a full grammar explained to

them. All they really hear are fragments: "Do this," "Try that!" "Please don't dangle Mommy's computer outside the window again." Yet with the exception of some future professional football players, they all end up speaking the full language, pretty much.

The reason is that the sound fragments don't just fall into a void. Many of the words the adults say, those anxious discussions about where exactly to buy this thing called "pastrami", will still whir past, unable to be recognised. But a few of the words are collected, slipping easily into an amazing contraption we walk around with, loaded inside our head.

A child's brain seems pre-primed to start re-arranging these first collected words, and send them back out as speech. But how can it possibly know which system of rearrangement will be best? This is where the parents' feedback comes in. A child in the French house will have heard hundreds of rushed phrases, and in most of them, whenever an adjective noun mix could be identified, the adjective was after the noun. The child will naturally try saying *rouge* after *pyjamas* when it points to that tattered red thing it's insisting on wearing again. An English immersed child will do the reverse.

If either of them gets it wrong the parrots might offer

a correction, but that's rarely necessary. Children are incredibly good at clicking the waiting brain switches into place – by the age of three their success rate is rarely under 93 per cent – and once the full panoply of adult switch-settings lock in, even greater feats can be performed. There are probably over 8,000 sentences in today's paper, and even ones you've never read before, ones that engage in cheap tricks such as referring back to Mel's quest for the pastrami-hungering adoptee to guarantee their uniqueness, are usually enough comprehended by the parsing, sorting and analysing system built up from this implanted language potential.

Philosophers had long argued about innate ideas, but the details of this waiting switching system was only first brought out by Noam Chomsky, starting in the 1950s. It made him a star. The old-style lab psychologists, with their simple rat-and-maze models of behaviour, were wiped from the field. (How could they possibly encompass subjects able to generate an infinite number of fresh sentences?) Sociologists loved the enhanced view of human motivation. When women spontaneously tell stories about themselves, for example, they often describe group action as

succeeding: in men's stories, by contrast, it's usually a single hero, acting alone, who triumphs. This sort of analysis can't go far – let the tape recorder run for several hours, and a lot of the male/female language differences disappear – but something like an early switch-setting seems suspiciously involved.

Most importantly, Chomsky's early work made racism impossible. Black English had long been insulted in the US for being so crude as to actually use double negatives – as in Mohammed Ali's explanation to the chiding air hostess, "Superman don't need no seat-belt!" (To which she famously replied, reaching forward to buckle him anyway, "Sure, honey child, but Superman don't need no airplane.") Transferred into French though the negative would be perfectly allowable, simply being the *ne...pas* construction for negative concord. And all three languages would seem crude compared to the Kivunjo spoken in one part of Tanzania, with its 14 tenses and seven prefixes, and suffixes, which its native speakers click into without problem – just as Mr Brooks would too, if he had been deposited there young enough for his language switches to be set in Kivunjo mode.

Tomorrow: Economics

ack and white

obituaries / gazette

Mervyn Cowie

The great task of Mervyn Cowie's life was the pioneering of wildlife protection and the development of tourism throughout East Africa.

Cowie was one of only a few who had the vision to realise that the animals' saviour was going to be the tourist. Only tourism could attract the sort of revenues needed to establish parks and all the elaborate infrastructure necessary to make them a success. Many millions would be required – but even more millions would be earned, virtually all of it in foreign currency.

Cowie was born in British East Africa in 1909, his father having resigned as Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg in order to settle in Kenya. His mother was the archetypal colonial wife: dauntless, indomitable, fiercely determined in the overcoming of every obstacle and difficulty of living in raw Africa and raising two sons.

Cowie loved to narrate the tale of his parents entertaining some important government guests to dinner. The meal was to begin with soup and croûtes, all carefully prepared under the supervision of his mother. When the soup arrived it was almost comatose-like and devoid of any colour. After the guests had gone Mphisi, the cook, was asked why he had removed the croûtes to which he replied that messiah had left all these things floating in the bowl and he thought they should not be there. She enquired as to how they had been removed and was informed that one of Mervyn's socks had made an excellent sieve; then, seeing the look of horror on her face, he hastily added that she need not worry, it was not a clean one!

Cowie was educated initially in Nairobi before going "home" (as Britain was referred to by the colonials) to study at Brighton College and Oxford. He returned to Kenya in 1932 after qualifying as a chartered accountant. Almost immediately he became alarmed by the very obvious depletion of wildlife since his departure, which was the result principally of a total lack of any governmental policies on conservation.

Between 1932 and the start of the Second World War Cowie served as a district councillor in Nairobi, trained with the King's African Rifles as a reserve, and above all, campaigned tirelessly and with missionary zeal towards his great vision of a series of National Parks and an

efficiently run system for game conservation.

Frustrated by unshakeable government lethargy, he embarked upon a ploy of anonymously advocating, via the press, a policy for the destruction of all wildlife in East Africa with a view to enhancing agriculture. His ruse worked: the government was so startled by public reaction to such an outrageous suggestion it was forced to do something. This consisted simply of forming a committee to examine the matter, but a start had been made.

Nairobi Park, the first in Kenya, was opened in 1946, with Cowie as Executive Director. Gradually he opened a whole series of parks throughout East Africa, later to be scaled to the



Cowie: Kenyan wildlife protection

title of Royal National Parks. These included the famous Tree-Tops, where Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip were staying in 1952 when she learnt of her accession to the throne. Cowie was tasked with protecting the royal party from wild animals during their stay. There was a bull elephant lurking in the trees nearby and the problem was how to shoo him away. Ever resourceful, Cowie, who could charm birds from the trees, found the solution. Approaching the bull carefully, keeping out of sight and downwind, he selected a large pebble, rubbed it vigorously under his armpit and then buried it past the animal and upwind of it. Hearing the thud as the stone dropped, the elephant turned in that direction, picked up Cowie's aroma and immediately charged, happily in the desired direction.

Despite his tireless and often lonely and frustrating efforts to further the animals' interests, Cowie nevertheless found time to assist and advise on the forming of similar parks in Uganda and Tanganyika, to sit

on the Kenya Legislative Council (as his father had done) for 10 years, to run the demanding office of Director of Manpower during the Mau-Mau emergency in 1953, to co-found the Kenya Wildlife Society, act as East African representative for the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme, organise and manage extensive anti-poaching operations and of course travel extensively world-wide.

Cowie published three books on his life's burning passion, *Flycatchers* (1961), *I Walk with Lions* (1964), and *African Lions* (1965). The popular film, *Where No Vultures Fly* (1951), was a dramatised story of his work.

Not shown in that film was a curious adventure which befell him once whilst visiting one of his park out-stations in a light aircraft. Landing on a rough and dusty strip cut from the surrounding bush, Cowie, as he slowed to a halt, was horrified to see a rhino charging straight towards him. Then followed a pure Keystone Kops sequence as he was chased in his aeroplane by the rhino, twisting and turning desperately as he tried to dodge the creature whilst endeavouring to get to the end of the strip so that he could take off again.

In 1963 Kenya became independent, three years later Cowie resigned from the Parks. By 1970 he was established as a Senior Consultant to the World Wildlife Fund, spending much of his time in London, where he was particularly involved with fund-raising. He found that to be disagreeable and in 1972 he joined the African Medical and Research Foundation in Nairobi, the flying doctor service, as their financial director, a post which he held for seven years.

In time Kikenni, the house which Cowie's father had built in 1926, was sold, and he and his second wife Val returned to Britain. His latter days were much devoted to the writing of his last book which, sadly, he did not live to see published.

Francis Chamberlain

Mervyn Hugh Cowie, conservationist: born Nairobi, Kenya 13 April 1909; Founder and Director, Royal National Parks of Kenya 1946-66; Vice-President, East African Tourist Travel Association 1950-65; CBE 1966; married 1934 Molly Beay (died 1956; two sons, one daughter), 1957 Valori Hare Duke (one son, one daughter); died 19 July 1996.

Dr Zoheir Khayat

In Greek legend Sisyphus was condemned forever to push a great rock up a hill. Each time he reached the top it fell back again to the bottom. This was the story of Dr Zoheir Khayat. Three times he built up a splendid medical practice; each time it was overcome by revolution.

He was an extraordinary doctor who, from the mid-1950s, was driven from one Middle Eastern country to another, and ended up ministering to the sick in Beirut throughout the civil war at the cost of all his possessions and great personal danger.

His father had left Aleppo in Syria in 1897 in search of adventure and trade, taking the well-known silk route down to the Red Sea. He found a great deal of both in the Sudan. There he survived persecution by the Muslim leader, the Mahdi, but succeeded in becoming his advisor, briefly settling there long enough to meet Zoheir's mother Nozha, a woman of Turkish and Assyrian descent whom he married in 1909.

Zoheir, who was one of seven sons, was born in Omdurman in 1911. The family moved up to Cairo, where Zoheir was educated as a Roman Catholic. In 1931, accompanied by a twin brother, Sabry, Zoheir left Cairo for France to read medicine. The completion of his degree and thesis kept him busy in Paris and Montpellier until 1938, when he returned to Egypt to settle with his family and begin building up a private practice. In 1948, following a chance encounter, he met Claire Cassab, and they married shortly afterwards, a day after his birthday, on 1 August 1948.

By the age of 45, in Cairo, Zoheir Khayat had a happy family and an enviable first-class practice among the elite of the old Establishment and the Court itself. The advent of Nasser in the early 1950s put an

end to all his ambitions. He faced threats to his property, his religion and his liberty. Nasser's new regime hit the Christian and Jewish communities hard. Khayat's position as physician to King Farouk and the Jewish community made him particularly vulnerable.

In September 1961, fearing for his family's safety and his children's future, he drove them across the Western Desert and over the Libyan border. There he once again established himself as a leader of his profession, as physician to King Idris and his family.

After five years he felt again the numbing of revolution. Following several humiliating experiences in the hands of the increasingly influential revolutionary factions of the army, he decided to abandon his career in Libya. His two sons, Georges and Antoine, were already at school in Switzerland, and he and Claire followed them there. But he needed a Swiss Diploma of Medicine to be allowed to practice.

As a result of a family friendship with the British Ambassador in Benghazi, the boys moved to a new school in England, Ratisford College in Leicester. Then, thanks to a chance encounter at his sons' school, Khayat was persuaded by a fellow parent on the Board of the Save the Children Fund to go to Algeria and head a medical mission to care for some 30,000 tuberculosis victims, east of Laghouat, some 450km south of Algiers. After 18 months he badly damaged his back moving equipment and was no longer able to carry on.

He and his wife decided to go to Beirut, at that stage the most civilised, the most prosperous and by far the most pleasant city in the Levant. There for the next 10 years Khayat once again created a successful practice. But underneath the prosperity



Khayat: doctor to kings

of Beirut, the conflict between different races, different cultures and different religions was gradually increasing. In 1975 it exploded into open and violent civil war. Khayat felt it was his duty to remain in Beirut where the need for him was greatest. Each year he and his wife would travel to England for a brief holiday. Each year against all persuasion from their friends they would return to his patients, to their shattered flat, the shellfire and the bloody fighting in the streets. They faced this life of sacrifice in the belief that their friends, neighbours and patients needed his skills as a physician to surmount the trials and atrocities of such a brutal and cruel civil war.

Finally, some 10 years ago, when Khayat had reached the age of 77, they came back to London. Separation from their two sons had in no way weakened but rather strengthened family ties, while adding to parental pride was the sons' success – Georges as a doctor, and Antoine in banking and finance.

Ivor J. Crosthwaite

Zoheir Georges Khayat, physician: born Omdurman, Sudan 31 July 1911; married 1948 Claire Cassab (two sons); died Ipswich, Suffolk 22 July 1996.



A perfectionist who required anything out of tune to be done again and again: a painting by Nicholson of Eleana Anaraldi, Iona

Jim Nicholson

The National Trust for Scotland, during a time of burgeoning expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, was fortunate in bringing together a number of very different, but idealistic men and women, devoted not only to the built heritage of Scotland but to landscape and countryside. Prominent among them was Jim Nicholson, the trust's first Art Director, for whom the post of Art Director was later specially created.

Nicholson was in his own right a landscape painter of distinction. This year's National Trust for Scotland Edinburgh Festival exhibition contains some of Nicholson's pictures. His watercolours in particular to which he devoted so much of his energy and Inverewe Gardens, a National Trust property on the west coast, are quite simply beautiful.

The National Trust for Scotland was founded in 1931, 35 years after its English counterpart. Besides managing 18 major houses, it is the fourth largest landowner – after the Forestry Commission, the Duke

of Buccleuch and the Scottish Office – in Scotland. Nicholson was responsible for the production of all its booklets, guidebooks, publicity leaflets and advertising.

Sir Jamie Strathmore Darling, the trust's long-term Director, describes Nicholson as "the best art director the National Trust for Scotland could ever have found – not only in his own work, but in his leadership and guidance of his team, which because of his excellence expanded to six. The whole standard of National Trust productions and publications rose to great heights under him."

"He got the best out of people," said Mrs Vivien Bremner, a member of his staff. At the same time he was a perfectionist and anything that was simply out of tune would be required to be done and quite often done yet again.

Jim Nicholson was born in Orkney, Orkney, where his father was branch manager of a bank and his mother, a Graham, was of Scottish descent. After attending Prince Henry's Grammar School in Orkney, he suc-

cumbed to parental pressure to go into the bank – and loathed it. At 17 in 1941, he was almost thankful to be called up and trained to become a pilot officer in Bomber Command.

As a 20-year-old, he was in a Lancaster Bomber as radio operator over Dresden. My first serious conversation with him was shortly after he had joined the National Trust staff, about St Valentine's Day 1965. After we had done our business, prompted by the fact that I was a young MP and German rearmament was one of the great concerns of the day for my party, out of the blue Nicholson said: "20 years ago last night, I was bombing Dresden!"

For a man who loved beautiful things, of course, the destruction of the Baroque city and the Frauenkirche was a catastrophe. But what really moved him was the massive slaughter – and not only of German civilians. He told me that he felt guilty – irrational though it may have been – that so many of his contemporaries in bomber crews, lads little different from him, would never

return home. Later, he thought the denigration in some quarters of "Bomber" Harris was uncalled for, but that the real lesson was for political leaders to avoid war in the first place – "because not only nuclear weapons but all modern war can be unutterably dreadful".

The experience of Dresden gave him, though he would have been too embarrassed to make a point of it, other than in private conversation, a desire for service to other people. In 1945, he returned to the bank and attended evening classes at Leeds School of Art. Soon he realised that banking was not his métier and joined a Leeds advertising agency as a graphic artist. On promotion, and coming to Edinburgh in 1955 to work with McCallum Advertising, after nine years he persuaded the National Trust for Scotland that they needed an artist designer – which they certainly did.

Nicholson contributed to the artistic life of Scotland and for several years in the early 1960s he had his own country dance band which was in great demand

and made gramophone records. Music was a great passion and as his friend Allan Farquharson said at his memorial service: "Over the years he developed what he casually called his 'slide-shows'. These were the marriage of his wonderful photography with perfectly matched music, and I am sure that many people were entranced by these audio-visual productions. No one can have had any idea of the hundreds of hours of work he put in to make the perfect combination. He went all over the country giving these shows, at no charge, to audiences from small women's guilds to the Usher Hall, the great concert hall in Edinburgh."

Jim Nicholson was a superb ambassador – at large – for the cause of the National Trust for Scotland.

Tam Dalyell

James Hugh Nicholson, graphic designer and artist: born Orkney, Orkney 21 December 1924; Art Designer and Art Director, National Trust for Scotland 1964-83; died Edinburgh 25 July 1996.

Joyce Buck

A beauty and a wit, Joyce Buck was a prominent member of the film and American communities in London from the 1950s to the early 1980s. Her husband, the producer Jules Buck, had founded Keep Films with Peter O'Toole in 1958 and for the next 20 years produced all O'Toole's projects except for *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Joyce was a prime mover in American Democrats Abroad, and became the co-chairman (with Toby Hyde) for the McGovern and Carter campaigns, on both occasions turning her house into an office for months on end.

In 1980 she and her husband returned to Los Angeles, where she worked as an interior designer on the houses of Sam Jaffe, Ralph Edwards (of *This is Your Life*), Coral Browne and Vincent Price, Jane Wyatt and Mrs William Wyler.

Born Joyce Ruth Getz, she was a child actress in New York who went on to become a successful cover girl and then, at 18, a contract artist in Hollywood. Here, almost at once, she met and married Captain Jules Buck, a rising young executive at Fox, one of the founders (along with Sam Spiegel and John Huston) of Horizon Pictures and at that time – 1945 – emerging from a hair-raising and bilious war as a filmmaker, ("D'you think we should be behind enemy lines?"). Joyce stopped performing and from then on her marriage to Jules was paramount.

A committed American (especially during her long period in Europe), she and her husband were among the first to sense that the empty air in the film business was moving away from the big studios, and in 1952 they left for Paris (where Jules and Jacques Tati formed a partnership). Joyce first learnt flu-

ent French and then embraced French cultural life.

The next shift was to London in 1957 where our two lives merged; first because of business, but very rapidly we formed an enduring friendship.

We were together on a daily basis for some 20 years and shared many highs and lows, though not once do I recall Joyce Buck recounting her problems or complaining about any misfortune. Self-absorption and whingeing were not her style and from her, an American, I learnt to keep a stiff upper lip and to apply more lipstick in times of trouble.

Joyce Buck was an experienced and gifted interior designer and she took me under her wing when I (hitherto a gypsy) embarked on the task of making a home for my growing family in London. She could have gone to work and in six months delivered a ravishing house; instead, she walked me through museums (to see the best), through dirty basements, cluttered back rooms and flea markets (to find the affordable), and I learnt patience as she took me to obscure craftsmen "fixing" things in parts of London I didn't know existed.

Her method of teaching was subtle and tactful and she happily released me into a pleasurable lifetime of working alone. But I could never match her eye for beauty or a bargain. She also taught me to dress. She had a seemingly effortless perfection of appearance (she and Coral Browne were the most exclusively shod women I ever met). She instinctively knew how things ought to be as she gamely took on London, life and manners.

I don't recall which, but she was either my best man or she gave me away at my wedding to O'Toole in Dublin. The wedding



Buck: she instinctively knew how things ought to be

party acquired poets, singers, actors, a politician or two and considerable riff-raff as it wound its way through the Dublin night.

At five in the morning, in a room the like of which she could never have seen before (different wallpaper on each wall, stars on the ceiling and alarming linoleum on the floor, an unknown child asleep in an arm-chair), she found herself seated at a table groaning under Guinness bottles. Harry Brown – a wonderful Abbey actor who'd taken quite a shine to Joyce – shouted to her over yet another spirited rendering of "The Holy Ground". "Did you ever read *Finnegan's Wake*?" "No," she replied, taking a dainty sip of Guinness from a bottle and bestowing on him an

enslaving smile, "but I rather feel I'm in it."

We once landed in a clearing in a jungle with a mountain of Gucci luggage. She realised that we had misjudged the situation and sent the luggage back to the city, retaining only essentials. Which was how, once filming was over, she waved me off to an uncertain fate – "it'll be such an adventure, I wish I could come" – in which I was one of the few people to attempt the source of the Orinoco in an Yves St Laurent safari suit. She taught me to be game for anything while staying as gassed up as possible.

When our paths diverged and she returned to America, I appreciated with relief that Emerson was right when he said

"The best effect of a fine person is felt long after we have left their presence."

Sian Phillips

Joyce Buck was always beautiful, intelligent, generous, writes Lauren Bacall. She had grace, integrity, a great gift for friendship and, to top it off, wit.

We were friends for more than 50 years.

I remember, as we waited in the wings of the Lyceum Theatre to audition for a play called *Franklin Street* (by Ruth and Gus Goetz), looking at this girl – Joyce Gates (her stage name) – hoping we would not read for the same part as she, with her beauty, was sure to get it. As it happened we were both cast in the play, which was directed by George S. Kaufman. We were 17 years old.

Through a stroke of luck we ended up in California at roughly the same time and it was there that our friendship solidified. Two aspiring actresses, me under contract to Howard Hawks, Joyce beginning to make inroads of her own. On one occasion she accompanied me on a drive up Bogie's street of Sunset Boulevard to see if the lights were on in his house. This was followed by collapsing in hysterical laughter – as only 18-year-old girls can.

When I went to London to work and live for a year, it was Joyce who found me a house and showed me her antique haunts with which to furnish my home. She had charmed London as she did California – no one ever knew Joyce without becoming devoted to her.

Joyce Ruth Getz, actress and interior designer: born Chicago 17 April 1925; married 1945 Jules Buck (one daughter); died Santa Monica, California 13 July 1996.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn

Rabbi Hugo Gryn had the gift of humorous encapsulation, something which could be very funny indeed while carrying a little reminder of the valley of the shadow through which he had walked, writes Edward Pearce [further to the obituary by Albert H. Friedlander on 20 August].

"For you tell the story of the chicken and the pig who escaped from a farm in the west-

ern Ukraine. They came to a village stricken by famine. "Listen" said the chicken (most of Hugo's stories had someone saying "Listen").

"Listen. Between us we could keep these people in ham and eggs for a week."

"Be quiet will you" said the pig. "For you tell the story of the chicken and the pig who escaped from a farm in the west-

No one who worked with Hugo will forget the jokes, the hospitality and the generosity of spirit. He seemed in religion to be pre-eminently liberal, outgoing and inclusive asking non-religious Jews only to touch base without inquisition as to faith.

He was particularly fond of a circle of Anglican, Catholic, non-Conformist, and characteristically, Muslim friends.

He had spent time in Scotland as a young man and said that on entering Cambridge was asked where he came from; he replied in a Glasgow accent "Czechoslovakia".

As a young rabbi he was seized upon in Scotland by a community of Free Presbyterians who detained him for a week, delighted to entertain a rabbi and have their biblical He-

brew improved from the horse's mouth. But Hugo was that sort of horse.

Touched at different points in his life by Czechoslovakia, Scotland, Cambridge, the American south, India, metropolitan London and the Auschwitz which he remembered every day of his life, he was a dear and delightful man whom no one having known will ever forget.

BIRTHS

BARNER: On 9 August 1996, to Sarah and Roger, a son, Joseph Benjamin, a brother for Rebecca and Elizabeth.

ZUCKER: On 15 August 1996, to Alison (nee Rebenn) and David, a daughter, Naomi Sadie.

DEATHS

MADDRELL: Barbara, photographer, peacefully, in York, on 18 August 1996, aged 91. Widow of Hugh (died 1969). Cremation on Friday 23 August at 3.30pm. Enquiries to J.G.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Fielder & Son, telephone 01904 654400.

PEAKES: John, on Monday 19 August. Forever loved by Margaret, Tim and James. Service at Woking Crematorium on Tuesday 27 August at 11am.

No flowers but donations to the St. Peter's Ward Fund, Weybridge Hospital would be welcome, c/o Woking Funeral Service, 119-121 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 1LR.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, in Memoriam) should be sent to writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canine Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-253 2011 or faxed to 0171-253 2018 and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays

Princess Margaret, 66; Mr John Austin-Walker MR 52; Dame Janet Baker, mezzo-soprano, 63; Mr Christopher Brasher, athlete and newspaper columnist, 68; Mr Donald Dewar MR 59; Sir Ronald Garske, managing director and chief executive, the Weir Group, 56; Miss Anne Hobbs, tennis player, 37; Sir James Holman, High Court judge, 49; The Hon Gerald Lascelles, president, British Racing Drivers' Club, 72; Dr Thomas McLean, former director,

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, 66; Mr John Macdonald, film and television technologist, 88; Mr Barry Norman, broadcaster, 63; Mr James Pawsey MR 63; Mr Kenny Rogers, country and western singer, 45; Mr Peter Thurnham MR 38; Lt-Gen Sir Richard Vickers, a Gentleman Usher to the Queen, 68.

Anniversaries

Births: St Francis de Sales, bishop, 1567; William Murdoch, inventor, 1754; Asher Brown Durand, painter

and engraver, 1796; Jules Michelet, historian, 1798; Gustave-Adolphe Hira, physicist and meteorologist, 1815; Otto Goldschmidt, pianist and composer, 1829; Roark Whitney Wickliffe Bradford, novelist, 1896; William "Cow" Bassie, jazz pianist and bandleader, 1904. Deaths: Lady Mary Wrenley Montagu, author, 1762; Sir Aston Webb, architect, 1932; Leonard Constant Lambert, composer, 1931; Sir Jacob Epstein, sculptor, 1959; Benigno Aquino, Philippine politician, assassinated, 1983. On this day: Wellington de-

feated the French forces under General Junot at the Battle of Vimiero, 1808; the *Mona Lisa* painting was stolen from the Louvre, 1911; the London dock strike ended, 1923; Civil Defence was started in Britain, 1939; the Dumbarton Oaks conference started, 1944; Hawaii became the 50th of the United States, 1959. Today is the Feast Day of St Abraham of Smolensk, Saints Basilus and Maximian, Saints Lazarus, Celsus and Celerinus, St Pius X, pope, and St Simeon Apollinaris.

Lectures

National Gallery: Jacqueline Lewis, "Horses (iii): Van Dyck, *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I*", 1pm. National Portrait Gallery (guided tour): "The Performing Arts: portraits of actors and musicians 1500-1837", 2.30pm.

Changing of the Guard: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

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ST. JOSEPH'S
HOSPICE

Shares soar as lenders signal house market boom

NIG CICCUTTI
and TOM STEVENSON

Share prices soared to yet another record high yesterday, buoyed by further evidence of a pick-up in the housing market and good news from the high street and a strong oil price.

By close of trade yesterday, the FTSE 100 index closed 19.5 points higher at 3883.2, a rise of 0.5 per cent.

Traders said the increase was based on high hopes for a continuing housing market boom.

Their views were bolstered

yesterday by the regular monthly survey from the Building Societies Association, which showed that net mortgage lending in July was £1.2bn, some 7 per cent higher than the previous month.

Even more significantly, new mortgage commitments, the number of loans which societies expect to make in about two months' time, were 53,000, the highest since March 1994 and 40 per cent up on a year ago.

Ron Armstrong, deputy director general at the BSA, said: "Comparisons with 1995 are encouraging with net advances 68 per cent higher than

a year ago. Other housing market indicators are looking promising for future growth in the market. Transactions have been increasing and house prices are also rising."

Jonathan Loyne, UK economist at HSBC Greenwell, said: "The underlying trend is clearly upward. The next few months should see a strong increase in activity."

But Mr Loyne also warned of a potential slowdown in the run-up to the general election next year.

Analysts were also encouraged by figures showing that M4 - the broad measure of

money supply, including notes and coins in circulation, personal and commercial bank deposits - slowed to 8.8 per cent in the year to June, according to the Bank of England. Seasonally adjusted M4 grew 0.4 per cent in July from June, down from 0.7 per cent in June.

Lending by banks and building societies continued to increase.

The slowdown in money supply growth from annual rates of 10 per cent in May and June brought the figure back within the government's 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range for the

first time since last November. However, the British Bankers' Association said there was a £539m increase in consumer credit in July, while lending by major banks overall rose £2.67m in July.

Andrew Cates, an economist at UBS, the Swiss banking group, said: "The strength of consumer credit and housing market activity within the lending figures will be seized upon by the Bank of England as a potential threat to the inflation target."

Strong money supply growth is often seen as a pointer to future inflation, and Eddie George, Governor of the Bank

of England, has warned that interest rates might have to rise if it continues unchecked.

Markets were also boosted by expectations, later confirmed after trading had finished, that the US Federal Reserve would leave interest rates unchanged, and a Bundesbank cut in German rates helped the FTSE 100 to its second record high in three days.

Further evidence of the return off the consumer fuel-gauge, highlighted by unexpectedly strong results from Argus on Monday, gave the retail sector a push. Analysts said such strong growth

from a relatively stable performance augured well for more cyclically sensitive stores groups.

Another factor acting in the market's favour, according to analysts, was the perception that UK fund managers were sitting on uncomfortably high amounts of cash that would eventually be allocated to UK equities.

"Fund managers are getting very twitchy about having so much cash on their hands, and they're going to have to come into the market sometime," said Nick Parsons, a trader at Societe Generale Strauss Turnbull.

Digital costs push up losses at Orange

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

The costs of building a digital mobile phone network pushed losses at Orange up by more than 40 per cent to £125m in the first half of the year, the company announced yesterday. But Orange, which floated on the stock market in April, also revealed better than expected figures for the growth and profitability of its customer base, news which helped to boost its flagging share price.

Orange's customer base grew by 51 per cent in the first six months of the year, from 379,000 to 573,000. This was a significant improvement on competitors Cellnet and Mercury One-2-One, though short of the 225,000 increase for the market leader, Vodafone. Orange's share of the digital mobile market rose slightly, from 24.5 per cent to 25.8 per cent, though Vodafone's share improved by a bigger margin, to 32.2 per cent.

Other statistics suggested Orange customers have remained loyal as the network expanded. The "churn" rate, which measures the percentage of customers who switch to other networks, fell from 18.1 per cent in the year to December 1995, to 17.6 per cent in the year to the end of June.

This compares with a rate of 25.6 per cent reported by Vodafone in the spring, though some of this represented customers who move from one retail "service provider" to another while staying with the network itself.

One surprise was the slight increase in average monthly revenue earned from each subscriber, from £36.51 per month to £36.86. Jim McOderby, telecommunications analyst at stockbroker ARN Amro Hare Govett, said: "Everyone was expecting revenue per month to fall as Orange expanded. These figures suggest it's succeeding in its strategy to concentrate on high-value customers."

Orange continued to roll out its infrastructure expansion programme, adding 366 base stations in the first half of the year, bringing the total to 1,600. It said the service now covered over 90 per cent of Great Britain. The work-force has also doubled to 3,700. Shares in Orange have fallen heavily in recent weeks. Yesterday they rose 6p to 193p.

Satellite plans: Talks with promoter under way as broadcaster reveals record profits on £1bn revenue

Sky set for more pay-per-view boxing

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, is considering plans to broadcast top boxing matches on a pay-per-view basis this autumn, featuring star British fighters such as "Prince" Naseem Hamed.

Frank Warren, the leading British promoter, confirmed last night he had talked to BSkyB about putting together world-level matches featuring both British and US boxers.

"Pay-per-view is not just the future, it is a fact now," Mr Warren said. "If we don't broadcast fights on pay-per-view, all the major bouts will simply move to the US for the money."

The broadcasts would mark the first pay-per-view events in the UK since the controversial Bruno-Tyson fight, for which 650,000 Sky subscribers paid either £9.95 or £12.95. BSkyB has long hinted it planned further PPV events, including sport and films.

BSkyB's chief executive, Sam Chisholm, declined to comment directly on pay-per-view

plans. "The mechanics of how you do it are in place, and we know there is a silent majority out there who believe that pay-per-view is something they want," he said.

The news emerged as BSkyB, 40 per cent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, unveiled another set of record pre-tax profits, up 66 per cent year on year to £257.4m, on revenues that for the first time breached the £1bn mark.

Analysts said the results proved how lucrative Sky's near-monopoly in pay television continues to be, and suggested next year's figure could rise to as high as £350m, helped by yet another year in which the company will benefit from past tax losses to avoid mainstream corporation tax.

"This is an outstanding financial performance," Mr Chisholm said. He predicted an even brighter future for the company, following the introduction of digital television at the end of next year.

The digital satellite product has been the hottest consumer electronics launch in the history



Coming out fighting: Sam Chisholm believes there is a 'silent majority' who want pay-per-view television sport

Photograph: Paul Bulley

of the US, and will attract similar response here," he said. "Digital is a brand new market that a lot of people will want to get into." He confirmed that BSkyB, which broadcasts 30 channels in the UK, including Sky One, is considering jointly developing interactive services on digital TV with BT, the telecoms giant. These would include electronic banking and home shopping.

The digital plans call for as

many as 200 new channels, featuring movies, sport and as many as 60 channels dedicated to pay-per-view. Mr Chisholm declined to comment on talks now under way between BSkyB and the BBC to make a decision within two to three months.

Mr Chisholm also confirmed that heads of agreement had been reached with Leo Kirch, the Bavarian media mogul, to cement a pay-TV joint venture in Germany. The service, in

which BSkyB is to invest as much as £200m in start-up costs, will be owned 51 per cent by Kirch and 49 per cent by Sky.

"The German deal is an absolutely brilliant one for BSkyB," said one analyst. "They get a part of a market that has 32 million TV homes and a proven appetite for pay television."

There were some concerns, however, that BSkyB may not be able to maintain its fast growth,

as most competitors concentrate on the market and as its reliance on cable as a means of distributing its programming grows.

Revenues from direct-to-home subscribers rose 25 per cent in the year to June, compared to a 63 per cent jump from cable. "Cable is the best way to reach the mass market," said one analyst.

Investment Column page 16

Maxmin back with home shopping plan

NIGEL COPE

Jim Maxmin, the former chief executive of Laura Ashley, is planning a return to UK retailing with a home shopping concept currently on trial in the US.

Mr Maxmin, who left Laura Ashley with a £1m pay-off two years ago, is a director of Streamline, a Massachusetts company which fetches groceries, picks up and returns dry cleaning, returns rented videos and handles the family mail.

For a start-up fee of \$39 and a monthly subscription of \$30 the company takes a family's weekly order and delivers it into secure, chilled boxes in customers' garages. Delivery staff gain entry by punching a code into a keypad.

Backed by Mr Maxmin and Saul Steinberg, the legendary American entrepreneur behind

Reliance Insurance, Streamline has been under test in the Boston suburbs since 1993.

Mr Maxmin is now hoping to franchise the concept worldwide with the UK as his first target.

Speaking from his US home in Maine, he said: "This has all the characteristics of a business for the 1990s. There are certain distribution channels that are real dinosaurs. Banking and financial services is one. Supermarkets are another. People spend hours each week doing the grocery shopping. We can save them that discretionary time. Fifteen to 20 per cent of UK households would just eat this up."

Mr Maxmin has identified Essex and Surbiton in Surrey and Chelmsford in Essex as possible markets; suburban areas where traffic is lighter, making delivery more efficient.

He hopes to find franchisees



Jim Maxmin: 'This is a business for the 1990s'

among food distribution companies but has not ruled out signing a deal with a supermarket chain. "I've looked at France, Belgium and Holland and Denmark and I can't see why the concept won't apply there."

Streamline is aimed principally at higher income, time-pressed families who are prepared to pay a premium to

avoid the Saturday trip to the supermarket. It visits new customers to establish their requirements and organise a regular shopping list.

Customers phone or fax the list through to the company once a week, though from next month orders can be placed via the Internet. The goods are delivered the following day.

Bond jailed for three years for art fraud

Failed Australian businessman Alan Bond was jailed for three years yesterday for fraud involving a French impressionist painting.

In sentencing Bond, the Australian judge said the jail term was not the maximum 14-year sentence, but it would be like a "life sentence" as it would haunt the former high-flyer forever.

Bond, lauded as Australia's "Yankee Doodle" after winning the America's Cup yacht race in 1983, will appeal against the conviction, his lawyers later said.

Bond, whose personal fortune was estimated at A\$350m (£180m) in the late 1980s, was found guilty last Friday on four fraud charges surrounding the sale of Edouard Manet's *La Promenade*.

The jury found that Bond, 58, had improperly used his position as director of his former corporate flagship, Bond Corporation Holdings, to allow his private company to buy *La Promenade* for about A\$10m less than its value in 1988.

His private company, Dallah Investments, bought the painting for A\$2.46m and sold it a year later at auction in New York for A\$17m.

Judge Antoinette Kennedy said Bond's passion for art and his inability to accept that Bond Corporation was no longer his private fiefdom led to the fraud offences.

The judge dismissed a claim by defence lawyers that a custodial sentence would kill Bond because of his failing health.

An avid art collector in his heyday, Bond faces further charges associated with the collapse of his corporate empire in the early 1990s.

He was jailed for two-and-a-half years in 1992 after being found guilty of inducing a former friend to contribute to the rescue of a Western Australia bank while concealing a A\$16m fee for his own company.

He served only a few months in jail before a second jury acquitted him at a retrial.

Consumers call for power investigation

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

Electricity consumers' groups yesterday called for a full-scale investigation into the operation of the power generation market by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The Chairman's Group of Electricity Consumers' Committees, which coordinates the work of 14 regional committees, attacked the prices levied by generators and said National Power and PowerGen, the two largest generating companies, should be broken up.

Arguing that the generators were not passing on lower costs to consumers, Ken Prior, the acting chairman of the committees, said: "We believe there's no incentive for electricity companies to negotiate hard to get prices down."

He said power generation was "unregulated" and still controlled by National Power and PowerGen, which together account for around 40 per cent of the market. The two have reduced their share after the industry regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild, threatened them with a referral to the Monopolies Commission.

National Power sold 4,000 megawatts of capacity to Eastern Group, the regional supplier, and PowerGen sold it a further 2,000, giving Eastern 9 per cent of the market.

But Mr Prior said Eastern's acquisition had not made much difference to the price mechanism in the generation market.

"We can't see that it is adding to competition," he said.

The Electricity Pool - the wholesale electricity market

which sets the price of power on a half-hourly basis - was still far too influenced by National Power and PowerGen. The two companies dominate the "mid-merit" segment of the pool which generally determines the price at which all other generators can then sell their power.

Mr Prior said he was disappointed that cheaper gas generators did not have more influence over the pool price mechanism.

The Chairman's Group said it would be putting its case to Professor Littlechild next month, and they believe that he was sympathetic. But a spokeswoman for the regulator said that he believed National Power's purchase of generating capacity had increased competition.

The Consumers' Committees also accused the regional electricity companies of brinkmanship in their approach to the introduction of domestic competition, planned for April 1998. On Monday the Regulator said that competition should be phased in over 18 months from April 1998.

Mr Prior said that "four or five" Regs were dragging their feet over competition, and attacked the way the process had been organised: "They didn't project manage it, they set up committees," he said.

The electricity companies have been privately critical of the regulator for not taking a lead over the development of competition. Yesterday the Chairman's Group said Professor Littlechild had not done enough to prepare customers for the change. "It's disturbing that Oftec has not given any consideration to the propaganda campaign," Mr Prior said.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD (%)	1995 High	1995 Low	YTD (%)
FTSE 100	3883.20	+19.50	+0.5	3883.20	3632.30	4.03	3883.20	3632.30	4.03
FTSE 250	4385.30	+17.00	+0.4	4385.30	4015.30	3.44	4385.30	4015.30	3.44
FTSE 350	1941.00	+9.50	+0.5	1941.00	1816.00	6.80	1941.00	1816.00	6.80
FT Small Cap	2144.72	+5.05	+0.2	2244.36	1954.06	3.10	2244.36	1954.06	3.10
FT All Share	1917.75	+8.79	+0.5	1924.17	1791.66	3.84	1924.17	1791.66	3.84
New York	5710.18	+10.72	+0.2	5778.00	5329.24	2.18	5778.00	5329.24	2.18
Tokyo	21127.01	+20.80	+0.1	22066.90	18734.70	0.781	22066.90	18734.70	0.781
Hong Kong	11312.61	+99.03	+0.9	11994.99	10204.87	3.431	11994.99	10204.87	3.431
Frankfurt	2560.26	-2.50	-0.1	2553.49	2253.36	1.701	2553.49	2253.36	1.701

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Short term rates					UK medium term				
Index	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	Index	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
UK	5.72	6.13	7.73	8.08	7.81	8.14	8.14	8.14	8.14
US	5.28	5.81	6.55	6.57	6.80	6.89	6.89	6.89	6.89
Japan	0.58	0.75	3.13	3.21	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3.81	3.94	6.25	6.70	6.99	-	-	-	-

Source: Bank of England

CURRENCIES									
Pound					Dollar				
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	1996 High	Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	1996 High
£/US\$	1.5472	+0.0176	1.5377	1.5472	\$/£	0.6463	+0.014	0.6503	0.6463
£/DM	1.5480	+0.0086	1.5337	1.5480	DM/£	0.6460	+0.013	0.6520	0.6460
DM/£	2.3043	+0.0397	2.2838	2.3043	DM/£	1.6883	+0.011	1.6852	1.6883
¥/£	187.608	+0.771	148.542	187.608	¥/£	108.330	+0.38	96.5008	108.330
Index	84.8	+0.1	84.4	84.8	Index	99.4	+0.2	94.2	99.4

Source: Bank of England

OTHER INDICATORS									
Oil Brent					Gold				
Index	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago	1996 High	Index	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago	1996 High
Oil Brent	20.57	+0.15	16.28	20.57	Gold	387.40	+0.80	383.70	387.40
Gold	260.38	+0.25	249.52	260.38	Base Rates	-	-	-	-

Source: Reuters

Now this may simply be posturing, a negotiating stance to extract the best deal for Britain. But the UK dropped cabotage from its wish list many moons ago and so it is not an issue, except to Virgin Atlantic. All very odd.

ts Tuhmans architectural coat-
Africa's Barlow for £17m. Cour-
ustrial and heavy duty coatings
s in Australasia and South-east

● Courtaulds has agreed to sell its Tuhmans architectural coatings business in Australia to South Africa's Barlow for £17m. Courtaulds said the aerospace, industrial and heavy duty coatings businesses of Courtaulds Coatings in Australasia and South-east Asia are unaffected by the sale.

John De Lorean: His gull-winged car project was 'an extraordinarily risky venture

business

Can anything now stop BSkyB?

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

From being one of the City's most maligned stocks at flotation 18 months ago, BSkyB has rarely looked back since, soaring to an all-time high this week in expectation of record profits for the year to June. Sam Chisholm, chief executive, duly obliged yesterday, unveiling £257m in pre-tax profits, a dividend of 5.5p, and revenues above £1bn for the first time.

The shares, trading at a whopping 535p, up from just 240p at flotation, have seemed to defy gravity, especially since BSkyB clinched a deal to jointly develop pay-TV in Germany with Bavarian mogul Leo Kirch earlier this year. It helped, too, that the Office of Fair Trading gave the company a clean bill of health following an investigation into allegations of monopolistic behaviour.

Can anything now stop BSkyB? The company has the best programming from Hollywood and the world of sport, the best management subscription system in the country, and the only viable encryption technology for the scrambling and unscrambling of TV signals.

Importantly, it has proven it can increase subscription prices every year, on the back of new programming. This year, viewers get the Warner Channel, the Weather Channel, and seven new services from the Granada-BSkyB joint venture. The cash flow allows programme purchase budgets to rise yet further, enticing new subscribers and sending revenues higher. Sam Chisholm calls it the "virtuous circle".

There are a few worries on the horizon, all the same. Up until now, BSkyB has generated the bulk of its revenues from its charges to direct-to-home (DTH) viewers (those equipped with satellite dishes). But more than half of net new subscribers are now getting their Sky Television channels via cable, which generates lower revenues per household than DTH.

BSkyB faces some big bills in the next few years. The first will be as much as £200m to develop DFL, its German pay-TV venture. Then it will have to meet the costs of introducing digital satellite in the UK, which no one has been able to reliably quantify.

There is no problem with the big investment demands; Sky has virtually no debt and generates pre-tax profits of nearly £3 a second. But the amazing profit margins of late don't look sustainable.

Of course, BSkyB has been underestimated before. It could be that the company manages to migrate its existing near-monopoly from analogue to digital, maintaining its profit margins.

There must be a risk, however, that the expected profits of £320m in 1996/7, or 17.1p a share, will be the end of the red-hot growth period for

BSkyB, as it settles into being a big, profitable but more mature broadcaster. That would make the forward multiple of a whopping 31 times earnings look demanding.

Orange is still a leap of faith

Markets can be cruel to recently floated growth stocks if they are priced too aggressively and Orange has been no exception. Investors who paid 205p in April's flotation have had a nail-biting time over the past few weeks, watching the share price climb to a peak of 254p, only to drop to a low of 173p. The future apparently wasn't as "bright" for shareholders as the company's undeniably slick publicity had suggested. Yesterday things began to perk up again, even though Orange reported a 40 per cent increase in its half-yearly losses to £125.2m. The share price climbed 6p to 193p.

The problem investors have been experiencing is that not even Orange's im-

pressive technological wizardry has allowed anyone to travel into the future to see how much of the company's undeniable promise can be translated into hard profits.

Optimists can point to a mass of statistics which show Orange's impressive customer loyalty. "Churn" rate – the pace at which customers switch to other networks – fell from 18.1 per cent in the first half of 1995 to 17.6 per cent in the first six months of this year. That compares with Vodafone's last published figure of 25.6 per cent at the end of March and 30 per cent for Cellnet.

More impressive is the fact that Orange's average monthly revenue earned from each customer rose from £36.51 to £36.86. It may not seem much, but analysts had expected revenue per head to fall as lower-spending customers joined the network. So not only are Orange's customer loyal, they are also – probably – better customers than those of some other networks in terms of spending power.

That's the good news. According to more pessimistic analysts, however, there is an equally worrying downside. The City consensus is that Orange will

lose £250m this year, up from £140.5m last year as it continues to spend heavily on building its network. By anyone's standards these are big numbers. Vodafone, on the other hand, will make around £500m just from its UK operations, with Cellnet expected to make £230m. Investors are unlikely to see any profits worth mentioning until 1998/99, and dividends may come later still. Orange remains a leap of faith.

Takare suffers in care confusion

The past year has been bloody for private nursing home groups, but few have suffered as badly as Takare, biggest in the sector. Standing at 225p last September, the shares have since crashed to 136p, up 5p yesterday. The well-publicised squeeze on local authority funding has hit the group particularly hard, heavily dependent as it is on social service department budgets.

After more than three years of operation, the problems associated with the Community Care Act, which devolved financing of the elderly to local authorities, show little sign of resolution. The system appears to be in paralysis in parts of the country like Liverpool, choking up hospitals with old people who should be in homes. Takare's occupancy levels have been hit accordingly, falling 4 points to 92.4 per cent in established homes during the six months to June. With a big opening programme, Takare is highly geared to occupancy and this relatively modest drop has had a disproportionate effect on the interim figures. Pre-tax profits slumped 13 per cent to £8.66m in the half year.

The occupancy problems, which have been concentrated in some of the start-up homes, have now prompted a radical change in strategy. Takare is dumping its new build approach in favour of acquisitions. Management reckons it could live with up to 80 per cent gearing if the right deals come along, giving it firepower of around £100m, although it is ruling out hostile bids like Westminster Healthcare's tilt at Goldborough.

At the same time, Takare plans to sweat existing assets by courting more private payers and high dependency residents, while offering more services from homes, such as meals on wheels, and district nursing.

The strategy makes sense, but with political uncertainties continuing, the external climate remains cloudy. Profits of around £18m this year would give a forward multiple of 12. Hold.

Sharp-tongued Chisholm aims a blow at Panmure

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK



Sam Chisholm, chief executive of BSkyB, put a good-natured boot into Anthony de Larrinaga of Panmure Gordon at the analyst's meeting yesterday.

Mr de Larrinaga has been advising clients to sell BSkyB for months, even as the share has charged ahead to 535p. He thinks the shares in Rupert Murdoch's money machine are worth, at most, 450p.

As the meeting proceeded, Mr Chisholm swatted the doubting de Larrinaga: "You go ahead and continue to make your client's poorer."

John Greenhalgh and his colleagues at PR outfit City of London will be celebrating with a bottle or three of Pinot Noir 1982 from the Coldstream vineyard in Victoria, Australia today.

The firm is due to receive a cheque for £100,000, thanks to an investment in the Coldstream vineyard two years ago which has come spectacularly right.

But it did not go quite as planned, admits Mr Greenhalgh. "We invested £160,000 two years ago in order to use Coldstream to build a financial services arm in Australia. The asset value of the shares covered the price. But now Southcoast (a big Australian wine maker) has bought Coldstream, and the investment has been a winner."

Other shareholders in Coldstream include members of the Coldstream Guards, Mr Greenhalgh adds. City of London, which gained promotion from the USM to a full listing this month, has another £5m invested in various situations, including a chunk of Signet it bought three years ago. At this rate, Mr Greenhalgh will be trading spin doctoring for investment trust status.

Get fit with the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Chalstre is calling on everyone in

Keith Bradshaw, chairman of Takare, the nursing home group, is justly proud of the success of his company. But Mr Bradshaw, son of a Birmingham machinist, is also a director of a chain of motor dealers in the Midlands, and of BLT Industries. The latter business is beloved of heavy metal "musicians" – as it makes amps, speakers and keyboards for HM bands, with exports to Germany and Japan.

Mr Bradshaw declared: "It's the one I get a real kick out of. Selling imported cars or a service business like this [Takare] is all very well, but Brum was founded on making things."

the City to support the Corporation's "Good health to the City and the Nation" day on Saturday 7 September.

Sadly, this does not mean that the Lord Mayor will be shedding his emine and stepping into Mr Motivator-style hysteria. However, a spokeswoman says: "He's a keen swimmer. He's a very keen walker, and he's gone to Scotland for his holidays."

The battle of the Barings books is heating up. The allegedly definitive version of the merchant bank's collapse by John Gapper and Nick Denton, due out on 23 September, is being pre-empted by two paperbacks.

In what Mr Gapper, the *Financial Times*'s urban banking editor, suspects is "a spoiler", Stephen Fay's hardback *The Collapse of Barings*, published last February, is

being put out again as a paperback in a fortnight's time. Not to be outdone, Nick Leeson's own tome, *Rogue Trader*, ghost-written by Edward Whitley and also published last February, is due to appear as a paperback.

Mr Gapper is unflustered about the fate of his *All that Glitters: The Fall of Barings*. "Wait till the 23rd. You'll get the real thing," he purrs.

Chris Ring, formerly head of private client stockbrokers Wise Speke, has had a nervous start as head of NatWest Stockbrokers, the bank's retail arm. The business side is fine, but he had a hard time dealing with a hot air balloon ascent which the bank staged as part of a "meet the press" stunt.

"I don't particularly like heights," he admits. "You take your life in your hands when you join NatWest."

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Armitage Brothers (F)	26.2m (23.6m)	1.40m (1.16m)	22.9p (19.3p)	7.2p (6.8p)
BSkyB (F)	1.01bn (778m)	257m (155m)	13.8p (8.7p)	5.5p (2.5p)
Cassini Property (F)	11.3m (13.8m)	0.73m (1.17m)	3.3p (5.6p)	1.45p (1.45p)
Glenchewton (F)	10.3m (5.12m)	0.54m (0.10m)	1.71p (0.35p)	0.45p (0.3p)
Grasby (F)	-	5.0m (5.4m)	5.7p (5.8p)	2.7p (2.7p)
Orange (F)	25.7m (100m)	-1.25m (-88.8m)	-0.13p (-0.12p)	nil (-)
Perry Group (F)	23.3m (217m)	4.09m (2.98m)	10.5p (7.7p)	32.5p (2.5p)
Takare (F)	59.0m (52.0m)	8.7m (10.0m)	5.5p (5.5p)	1p (0.9p)
Thistle Hotels (F)	148m (130m)	-63.7m (12.8m)	-6.84p (1.36p)	nil (-)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim

Refuge attempts to avert revolt on United merger

NIC CICCITI

Senior executives at Refuge Assurance, the insurer, will today meet with Perpetual, the fund manager and one of its largest single shareholders, in an attempt to avert a threatened vote against the planned £1.4bn merger with United Friendly.

The meeting will be held to discuss Perpetual's claim that Refuge shareholders are getting a raw deal from the merger, which undervalues the

company by up to £500m. But Neil Woodford, fund manager at Perpetual, said yesterday that if the talks did not resolve the significant worries he had over the exact terms of the merger, he would vote against it at a special shareholders' meeting on 9 September.

"I will make my own mind up in the light of what is said and the discussions we hold with Refuge. My position now is that this merger is a bad deal for shareholders and should not be

supported," Mr Woodford said. "I do not know how other shareholders might react. The position is that since I made my opposition known, a significant number of small shareholders have been in touch to say they agree with my arguments. Some other fund managers with larger holdings also have reservations. The meeting itself requires a simple majority for it to succeed."

Mr Woodford's comments follow a wrangle between Perpetual and Refuge over the exact proportion of so-called "orphan assets", which are attributable to shareholders before the merger with United Friendly takes place.

Perpetual, which holds 7 per cent of Refuge's shares, believes that the a greater part of the surplus which had accumulated in the insurers' funds since its formation in the late 19th century, belong to shareholders.

The fund managers' argument is based on arguments over the exact value of Refuge's pension fund and how much of its surplus shareholders are entitled to.

Also on differing views of the proportion of funds in the ordinary and industrial branches of refuge's business which are assets distributable between policyholders and shareholders. Perpetual's view is that all funds accumulated before 1928, since when a 90/10 split

in favour of policyholders has been in force, should go to shareholders. The company also argues that part of the funds accumulated in a separate ordinary branch, which represents policies where premiums are still collected door to door, should also go to shareholders.

Although this was blocked by the Department of Trade and Industry, Perpetual argues that Refuge should have argued harder for it to happen.

finance & legal

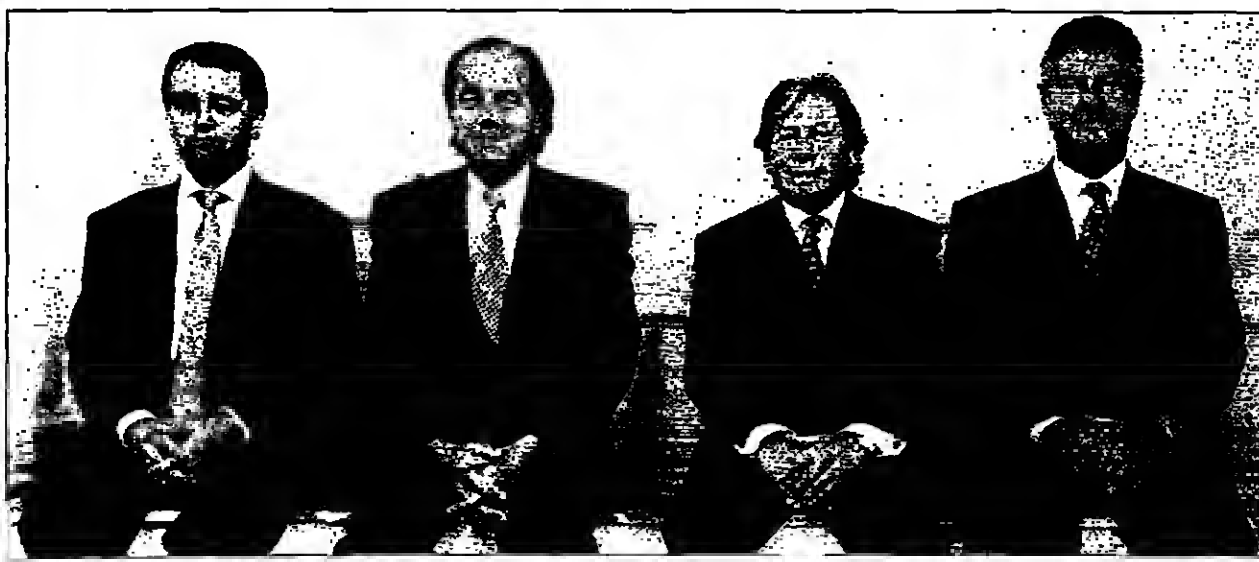
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section two

Thistle joins growing list of hoteliers coming to the market



Good times: The Thistle board of directors has been encouraged by the tourist boom to float

Photograph: Jane Baker

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

The hotel sector's rush to the stockmarket was joined by another heavyweight group yesterday as Thistle Hotels, London's biggest hotelier, confirmed its plans to float next month in an international placing and intermediaries offer.

The offer, which is expected to value the former Mount Charlotte Group at between £1bn and £1.5bn, is being pitched particularly at small private investors who will be offered discounts on hotel rooms as a perk.

The return of Thistle, owner of the five-star White's Hotel, Cannizaro House in Wimbledon and 98 other mainly four-star hotels, will coincide with the planned flotation of Lornho's hotels arm, Princess Metropole. Both companies are ex-

pected to tap investors for between £500m and £700m, prompting some analysts to question whether the market might start to tire of so many demands from one sector.

So far this year four companies have come to the market – Millennium & Copthorne, Jarvis, Macdonald Hotels and Cliveden – and more floats are expected next year.

Robert Peel, Thistle's chief executive, said he believed there would be plenty of demand for shares in good quality hotel companies, especially one such as Thistle which focused exclusively on the UK, thanks to the £3bn that was effectively taken out of the sector by Granada's takeover of Forte at the beginning of the year.

Thistle, and the other hotel floats, are counting on a continuation of the buoyant conditions in the UK market,

especially in London, where record numbers of tourists are pushing occupancy levels higher and bidding up room rates.

Thistle, which announced an 88 per cent jump in underlying profits in the six months to July, said room sales in the capital had risen by 22 per cent during the period. Thanks to the relatively fixed cost base of the hotel business that had given profits a massive boost – according to Mr Peel, for every £1 of extra revenue profits in London rose by 73p.

Thistle actually reported a loss before tax of £63.7m compared with 1995's first half profits of £34.8m due to an £87.8m exceptional charge which formed part of a £204.6m write down of the value of the company's £1.7bn portfolio of 100 hotels.

The flotation of Thistle provides a partial exit route for the company's largest shareholder

Brierley Investments, the New Zealand-based conglomerate that acquired the former Mount Charlotte in 1990. Representing more than half Brierley's assets it was always understood that it would attempt to reduce its stake when market conditions allowed.

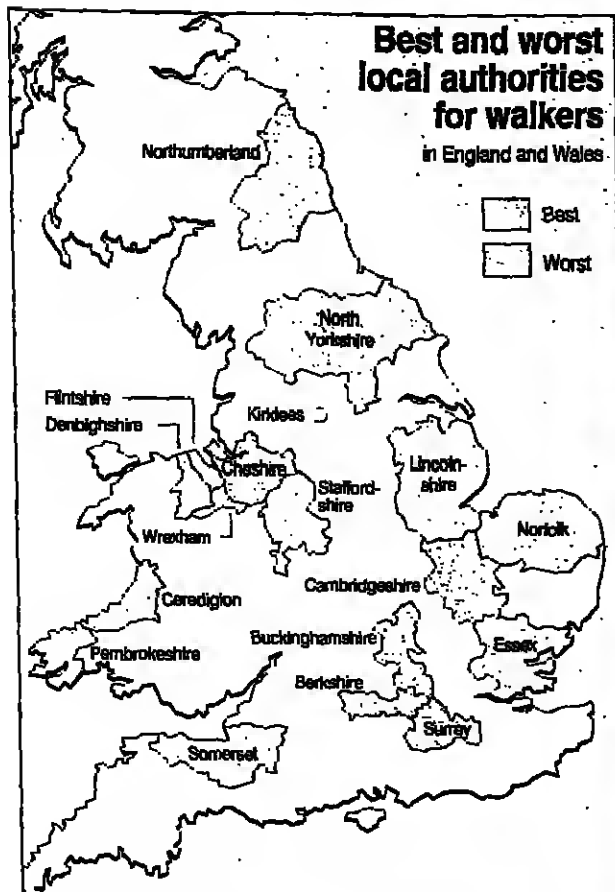
Brierley plans to lower its stake from 70 per cent to under 50 per cent. The Singaporean government, which holds the remaining 30 per cent, is expected to reduce its holding by a similar proportion.

Although no indicative price will be announced until the prospectus is issued in the middle of September, initial soundings suggest £250m of new money will be raised of which £150m will repay a convertible loan and £100m be used to expand Thistle's current 13,600 rooms by about 2,000.

Comment, page 17

news

Great walking. Beautiful scenery. A rambler's paradise ...if someone doesn't stop you finishing the journey



Ramblers in England and Wales have a one in three chance of completing a two-mile walk on rights of way

STEPHEN GOODWIN

Barbed wire, undergrowth, locked gates and crops look like turning the Government's target of an unobstructed country footpath network by 2000 into something of an embarrassment.

In 1987, the declaration that all 140,000 miles of public paths in England and Wales would be open to walkers had a popular ring. After all, some 250 million walking trips of more than two miles are made in the countryside each year. But the target, set by the Countryside Commission, is beginning to look an awkward hostage to fortune. Recent surveys indicate that 25 per cent of the network is still difficult to follow without encountering obstacles.

And despite entreaties from their own organisations – the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners' Association – to obey the law, a truculent or indifferent hardcore of farmers and landowners seem unlikely to change their ways unless county councils make robust use of their

powers under the 1990 Rights of Way Act.

The gap between the commission's target and reality was highlighted yesterday by the Ramblers' Association. At six locations in Britain, footpath activists drew attention to blatant examples of obstruction in the opening shot of a "Free Your Paths" campaign.

Not all the blockages could be blamed on farmers. In Epping Forest district, the association drew attention to a brick wall and wrought iron gate built by a householder across a right of way.

John Holmes, the RA's West Essex footpath secretary, said ramblers had been told as long ago as 1991 that the council was taking legal action to get the wall removed. Epping Forest district council acts as an agent for Essex County Council, but Mr Holmes said: "if the district council was a private company, it would have been sacked years ago for failing to do its job."

Epping is not unusual. In Somerset, RA chairman Kate Ashbrook led a group on a compass bearing through a field of



No go area: Ramblers stroll through Lambourn Valley Way, in Berkshire, which will be off-limits when the planned Newbury bypass crosses the path. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

six-foot high maize where the farmer readily acknowledged a footpath should be visible. "Footpath obstruction must be the biggest crime in the countryside," Ms Ashbrook said.

The maize field is in Westmore, near Cheddar, where local ramblers reckon about half the parish's 100 paths are obstructed. Somerset county council does not expect to have many of them in good order by the millennium.

The commission set its target after conducting a survey which found that walkers in England and Wales had on average only a one in three chance of being able to complete a two-mile country walk on rights of way.

The picture today is better, if patchy. It depends on whether highways authorities have the will and readiness to use scarce resources on implementing the

Act, which gave councils power to prosecute or remove obstructions themselves and send the bill to the landowner.

Somerset has a record of not prosecuting while Buckinghamshire for example, does. As a result, Buckinghamshire looks like meeting the deadline on clearing its paths.

The findings of a re-survey by the commission are due to be published in October. Thanks to a doubling of grant to councils for footpath work, to £25m, and the 1990 Act, these will show that at least three-quarters of the 140,000 miles are open for use. But the RA, some of whose 116,000 members did much of the leg-work for the survey, are concerned that with only three years to go to the millennium, 40,000 miles of network remain impossible or difficult to use.

Land of beauty and barbed wire

Snarling dogs and shotguns apart, nothing is more off-putting to country walkers than barbed wire, writes Stephen Goodwin. And in few areas are the entanglements more numerous than in the neighbouring parishes of Whitford and Ysceiog in Flintshire.

Walking is the most popular recreation in Wales yet it can often seem an unwelcome place for the ramblers. More than

half of the paths in its 25,000-mile network are reckoned impossible or difficult to use – a worse record than in England.

A deep-rooted dislike of outsiders in the quieter communities is tactfully hinted at by Welsh footpath campaigners who try to explain the difference.

Whitford and Ysceiog could not be described as remote. They are close to the busy North Wales coast and part of

the attraction of the green hill-sides is the splendid view over the Dee estuary, but it is hazardous terrain for the walker.

The Ramblers' Association's latest survey of the area lists 185 obstructions in the two parishes – 69 in Whitford and 116 in Ysceiog. Barbed wire is the most common, "stile wired", "electric fence", "affluent flooding", and "locked gate" are others. Well over three-quarters of

the paths in the area are blocked. The ramblers drew attention to the dismal record in 1992 and little has changed since, although the local squire, Lord Mostyn, did put footpaths on his own land in order.

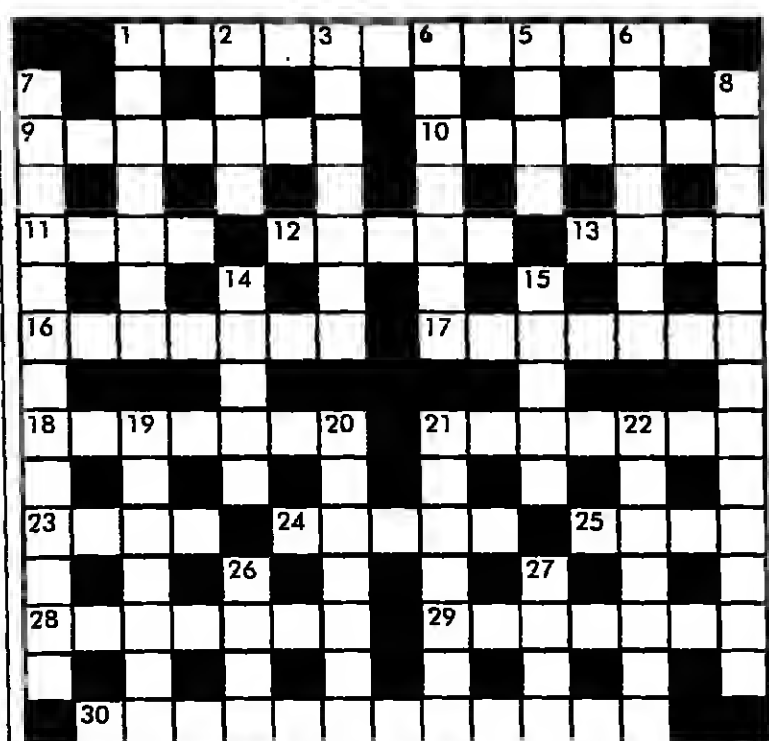
John Robinson, the RA's North Wales secretary, is not optimistic that Flintshire County Council will take action against farmers who refuse to cut away the wire.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3071. Wednesday 21 August

By Aquila

Thuesday's Solution



THURSDAY'S SOLUTION
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ACROSS

- 1 Man's overcoat reflected his fashion (12)
- 9 Great bat criticised, you'll hear (7)
- 10 Clementine's father taking Virginia to be a goddess (7)
- 11 Writer's tip considered? (4)
- 12 Feeble fellow to complain bitterly (5)
- 13 Following first at Goodwood, stable-boy is delighted (4)
- 16 Once, a five-year period of great drive and spirit (7)
- 17 Damper needed by trumpeter indoors, possibly? (7)
- 18 Irregular to show leading-lady, say, in unpleasant setting (7)
- 21 Rabbit on the cart that is upset (7)
- 23 Redundant potter? (4)

DOWN

- 24 Pen of a poet (5)
- 25 Gin – not quite enough for a revolutionary social gathering (4)
- 28 Swiss resort packed, we hear (7)
- 29 Place in which to learn music, originally, in various keys? (7)
- 30 The case for arms limitation (12)
- 1 Half of the fare from Dublin, going by air? (7)
- 2 Total energy used up by Australian natives, running (4)
- 3 Difficult to prove, the more complex it is (7)
- 4 Guides admitting Mum? Crumbs! (7)

- 5 Small hotels popular with partners at table (4)
- 6 German siren and the traditional knowledge that is left over (7)
- 7 This harness pinch a bit? (7-6)
- 8 Ticker-tape exponent making airdrop charge? (13)
- 14 Hearing difficulty (5)
- 15 Turkey on a plate to consume in banquet (5)
- 19 Badly lost around here in France? Ask! (7)
- 20 Abandon job and restart at Twickenham, perhaps (4,3)
- 21 Musical work of tin soldiers at the double (7)
- 22 Great suffering of fellows in the wrong? (7)
- 26 Piece of the sporrán that is not matched (4)
- 27 Means of raising flag (4)

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